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A study of ordinary theologies of death in selected Pentecostal communities in Britain

Richards , Lloyd George

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A STUDY OF ORDINARY THEOLOGIES OF DEATH IN SELECTED PENTECOSTAL COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN

by

Lloyd George Richards LLB, MA

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Abstract

The substantial growth of global Pentecostalism over the last century has necessitated a better understanding of the beliefs and practices of Pentecostals throughout the world. In Britain and many other Western countries, there appears to be a growing multiplicity of diverse beliefs and practices in relation to death. While there is a growing literature on Pentecostal eschatology, Pentecostal theologies of death have received little academic attention. This study makes a distinctive contribution to the Pentecostal understanding of death and eschatology within a British context. It also seeks to identify some of the key issues that arise from the ordinary theologies of Pentecostals drawn from selected Pentecostal churches comprising of diverse ethnic and inter-generational groups.

This study of ordinary theologies of death comprises of both theological analysis and theological reflection. For theological analysis, empirical data is gathered by means of interviews of Pentecostal clergy, focus groups with Pentecostal laity, observations of a selected number of funeral events, and content analysis of church documents and websites. For theological reflection, the model of 'Theology in Four Voices' developed by Action Research Church and Society Project is employed. This brings into dialogue the espoused theological voices of the clergy and laity, the operant theological voices embedded in death ritual practices, the normative theological voices of Pentecostal churches/denominations, and the formal voices of the academia. Ordinary theologies of death are also brought into dialogue with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholarship where it helps to articulate or interpret the data.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	African Initiated Church
ARCS	Action Research Church and Society
ATR	African Traditional Religion
AOG	Assembles of God
AGGBI	The Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland
BMC	Black Majority Church
COGOP	Church of God of Prophecy
EPC	Elim Pentecostal Church
NTCOG	New Testament Church of God
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
TFV	Theology in Four Voices
WLC	White Led Church

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the research

According to Douglas Davis, a leading British theologian in the theology and sociology of death, there are universal theological and cultural norms following the death of an individual that have remained consistent from the first century to the twenty-first century. These consist of phenomena such as the last rites, the methods of disposition and memorialisation rituals. However, in recent years in Britain the traditional death rituals has been changing. The reasons include changes in social stratification due to a fluctuating economy, neo-local spread of the family to many geographic locations, the decline in religious practices and the secularisation of society. Moreover, amongst many communities and cultures in the West there appears to be a growing multiplicity of diverse beliefs, worldviews and practices in relation to death and funeral rites.[1] As a result, the beliefs and ritual practices of the bereaved do not appear to correspond with the theological presuppositions of the Christian academy or church authorities. An exploration of theologies of death of the Christian faith can help to assess and evaluate diverse spectrums of belief. Furthermore, the substance and basis of the theologies of death of *Pentecostals* in Britain are even less clear as they have not had the benefit of significant critical discussion. For practical theologian Ray Anderson, theologies of death must provide adequate responses to the future destiny of humankind, questions about the possibility of life after and the final fulfilment of the goals and values experienced in this life.[2] Thus, Pentecostal theologies of death must also provide adequate responses to these questions.

[1] Douglas Davies, *The Theology of Death* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), p.15.
[2] Ray S. Anderson, *Theology, Death and Dying* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986), pp.4-5

Furthermore, from March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic had a fundamental impact on funerals and other death rituals in the UK. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to include in this thesis reflections on the effect this pandemic made on ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death. During this time Pentecostal clergy, as the case with clergy of other Christian traditions, were guided by central and local government guidelines, funeral directors, and their church authorities as to how funerals services should take place.

This thesis examines the ordinary theologies of death of selected Pentecostal congregations in Britain. A Pentecostal contribution towards the theological discussion about death has considerable value due to its global significance. As a global religious movement, with an estimated 500 million adherents worldwide, the Pentecostal/Charismatic represents one of the main branches of Christianity alongside Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism.[3]

1.2 'Theology in four voices' approach

In its examination of Pentecostal theologies of death, this thesis adopts a theological framework used by Action Research Church and Society (ARCS) called 'Theology in Four Voices' (TFV). This framework was developed by Helen Cameron and colleagues as a way of understanding the different places or sources from which theological discourses are disclosed.[4] The first 'espoused' voice is 'what we say we do' and represents the articulation of one's beliefs. The second 'operant' voice is 'what we actually do' which is embodied in one's actual practices.

[3] Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who they are, Where they are, and How they got there* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)

[4] Helen Cameron, and Deborah Bhatti et al, *Talking about God in Practice: Theological action research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), pp.52-56. For a recent discussion of the TFV, see chapter 4 of Clare Watkins, *Disclosing church: An Ecclesiology Learning from Conversations in Practice* (Oxon: Routledge: 2020).

The third 'normative' voice is the established doctrine and confessional theology of churches and denominations often codified in official statements of belief and policy documents. The fourth 'formal' voices represent the engagement with academic theological discourse. There is a further discussion about how the TFV approach is utilised in this study in chapter 3 which focuses on my methodology. For this research, espoused and operant voices are treated as primary sources of *ordinary* theology, a term which requires further examination.

1.3 Introduction to Ordinary theologies

Jeff Astley, a practical theologian, defines 'ordinary theology' as:

> The theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education.[5]

This research is also concerned with ordinary theology as practical theology as it seeks to map out the beliefs, attitudes and practices of ordinary people's concrete and distinctive lives of faith in relation to death. Pentecostal theologian, Frank Macchia, prefers to use the term *non-academic* theology as a way of distinguishing grassroots Pentecostal theology on a global level from the more academic methods. However, Macchia does not agree with Astley that ordinary theology is limited to those with no theological training. He argues 'that the non-academic theology of Pentecostals has not necessarily precluded disciplined exegetical work and theological reflection amongst Pentecostals and similar free-church movements.[6] In this research, some of the participants, in particular the clergy, had received some formal theological training but were still asked to share their personal views about death rather than

[5] Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002).

[6] Frank Macchia, "Pentecostal Theology," in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard van der Maas (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), pp.1020 – 1021.

the views of academic theologians. Therefore, responses of the clergy and laity are deemed to represent ordinary theology irrespective of whether or not they had formal theological training.

The concept of ordinary theology is not dissimilar to 'actual life' theologies as discussed by Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako. Bediako describe 'actual life' theologies as the theologies that emerge from the actual lives of ordinary African Christians. He argues that it is important to recognise the integrity of African Christian experience as a religious reality in its own right, distinct from Western Christian scholarship.[7] There will be a further discussion about the African Christian and pre-Christian experience with regards to theologies of death in chapters 5 to 9. In the meantime, Bediako's concept of actual life theologies is an alternative expression to ordinary theology which applies cross-culturally for people influenced by a combination of lived experience, personal history, church doctrine and teachings, and cultural context.

According to Astley, academic theology has been regarded as the most important source of theological discourse, however, it does not provide the full truth about concepts and dynamics of ordinary people's concrete and distinctive lives of faith. Therefore, he argues for the relevance of ordinary theology in the context of the lives of ordinary believers which themselves have their own authoritative voice and intellectual integrity, apart from academic theology.[8] However in his book, *Ordinary Theology,* Astley does not offer a researched empirical account of the beliefs of any group of 'ordinary Christians'.[9] In this study, I offer an empirical account of the beliefs of clergy and laity which are treated on the basis that they have

[7] Kwame Bediako, "Types of African Theology," in A. F. Walls and Christopher Fyfe (eds.), *Christianity in Africa in the 1990's.* (University of Edinburgh, 1996), pp.56-69 (59-61).
[8] Astley, *Ordinary Theology,* pp.1-4 & 13.
[9] Clare Watkins, "Practising Ecclesiology: From Product to Process," *Ecclesial Practices,* Vol 2 (2015) pp.23-39 (35).

their own authoritative theological voice. Marcia Webb makes the point that although the beliefs and values of ordinary people often may not be comprehensively understood, the desire and willingness to understand is vital.[10] In this study, there is a desire to collect and analyse aspects of ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death even though this does not always result in logically coherent or consistent beliefs.

1.4 Aims and objectives of research

The primary aim of this research is to explore the significance of ordinary theologies of death among selected Pentecostal churches in contemporary Britain. This involves exploring what is distinctive about ordinary *Pentecostal* theologies of death compared to other Christian traditions. In order to better articulate ordinary theologies of death that emerge from this research, espoused, operant and normative theological voices are brought into dialogue with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholarship.

Another aim is to identify and explain some of the key issues that arise within and between selected ethnic groups in relation to theologies of death. The selected ethnic groups are British white (represented by white led churches or WLCs), British African and British Caribbean (represented by black majority churches or BMCs). I also examine continuities and discontinuities between African *and* Caribbean traditional religions and ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death.

A final aim of the research is to stimulate clergy and laity to reflect theologically on the purpose of selected death and funeral rites, what they are meant to represent and practically on how

[10] Marcia Webb, "Toward a Theology of Mental Illness," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, Vol 16 .1 (2012) pp.49-73 (50).

they approach death. The aim is not to seek renewal or reconstruction of Pentecostal theologies of death in Britain but to interpret ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death in the light of the empirical data.

1.5 Research questions

The central research question is: How can ordinary theologies of death be articulated in dialogue with normative and formal theologies among selected Pentecostal churches in Britain today? This leads to a number of sub-questions:

What is the significance of the ordinary theologies of death among selected Pentecostal churches in Britain?

How do ordinary theologies of death converge or diverge with normative and formal Pentecostal theologies?

What are the key issues that arise within and between selected churches, ethnic and inter-generational groups in relation to theologies of death?

How do Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal formal theologies help to articulate or interpret ordinary theologies of death in relation to selected beliefs and practices?

1.6 The broad subject area and contribution of the research

This research is located within the field of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies and its intersection with theologies of death and eschatology. According to Ray Anderson, theology of death is concerned with (1) dying and end-of-life issues (2) the nature of human death at the point of death (3) what we believe about the human state after death and human destiny.[11] The research will primarily focus on (2) and (3) as it engages with issues such as the nature of the human soul, bodily theology and the resurrection of the dead. Theology of death is a sub-theme of eschatology and is concerned with the Christian understanding of the 'last things' or in the broadest sense of the term is a discourse about the destiny of the individual and the whole of creation. *Eschatology* represents the traditional Christian understanding of the 'last things' and applies both to the era of Christ's first coming and to the events immediately before his return and the end of this world.[12] A discussion of *classical* Pentecostal eschatology will be presented which is the oldest and most influential branch of the Pentecostal movement which began at the beginning of the 20th century. Mark Cartledge maintains that the contemporary Pentecostal movement retains most of the beliefs of classical Pentecostals although eschatological views have been modified over the course of the past hundred years by both classical and non-classical Pentecostals.[13]

It is important to define the other key terms relating to eschatology that are used in this thesis. *Realised eschatology* draws more focus on the Spirit's work in making the human physically and spiritually whole during their lifetime rather than focusing on the renewal of life at the end

[11] Anderson, *Theology, Death & Dying*, p.38.
[12] Jerry Walls, "Introduction" in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, Jerry L. Walls (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.4.
[13] Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Farham: Ashgate, 2010), p.2.

of their lifetime.[14] *Premillennialism* is the belief that Christ will literally and physically be on the earth for a thousand years during his millennial reign after the tribulation. *Apocalypticism* or the *apocalyptic* represents an aspect of future eschatology which is otherworldly, highly symbolic and interprets world history and current events from imagery in the Book of Revelation and other ancient texts as indicators of the imminent end of the world.[15] Although this research does not deal with apocalypticism *per se*, elements of ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death which are also otherworldly and highly symbolic mirror this genre.

Whilst there are a growing number of studies on eschatology by Pentecostal theologians such as Peter Althouse,[16] and James Glass,[17] theological reflection on death within the Pentecostal tradition remains scarce. This thesis makes an original contribution to the field of Pentecostal studies and the discipline of Practical Theology by investigating the ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death of selected Pentecostal congregations in Britain. As far as I am aware, it is also the first study to employ the 'Theology in Four Voices' methodological approach to examine the ordinary theology of Pentecostal congregations.

The normative theologies of most Pentecostal denominations are expressed in written statements of belief which sometimes include pronouncements on eschatology and the theology of death. However, these statements lack in depth critical discussion. This thesis aims to contribute towards this discussion by bringing these normative voices into dialogue with espoused, operant, and formal voices in order to articulate ordinary Pentecostal theologies of

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[14] Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days, Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann* (London: T&T Clark, 2003) p.16-20.
[15] Walls, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, p.4.
[16] Peter Althouse, "'Left Behind' – Fact or Fiction: Ecumenical Dilemmas of the Fundamentalist Millenarian Tensions within Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Vol 13 (2005), pp.187–207
[17] James Glass, "Eschatology: A Clear and Present Danger – A Sure and Certain Hope," in Keith Warrington (ed.), *Pentecostal Perspectives* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), pp.120-146 (137).

death. Douglas Davis and Ewan Kelly are amongst a number of British scholars who have examined the theological and sociological aspects of death in Britain.[18] However, the beliefs and practices in relation to *Pentecostal* death and funeral rites, particularly in Britain, have not received the benefit of significant critical discussion. This thesis contributes to the field of ritual studies within the study of religion by examining selected Pentecostal death and funeral rites and bringing them into dialogue with formal and normative theologies of death. Finally, this research contributes towards an understanding of African and Caribbean theologies of death by investigating the ordinary theology of African and Caribbean diaspora communities in Britain.

1.7 Background to the Pentecostal Movement

1.7.1 What is Pentecostalism?

The terms *Pentecostal* and *Pentecostalism* refer to a diverse and wide variety of movements scattered throughout the world that all have certain universal features and beliefs through its many manifestations. Pentecostalism was the fastest growing Christian religious movement in the twentieth century and by the beginning of the twenty-first century it had expanded into almost every country throughout the globe.[19] It is predicted that there will be approximately 8 percent of the world's population or over half a billion Pentecostal followers by the end of the century, a quarter of the world's Christian population.[20] Therefore, in the contemporary global context it is important to define what the term 'Pentecostalism'.

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[18] Davis, *The Theology of Death*; Ewan Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals* (London: Mowbray, 2008).
[19] Allan Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," in Allan Anderson et al (eds.), *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories & Methods* (London: University of California Press, 2010), p.13.
[20] David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing, "Missiometrics 2008: Reality Checks for Christian World Communions," *IBMR* Vol 32.1 (2008), p.30.

There are a number of theological approaches to defining Pentecostalism. Amos Yong prefers the capitalised expression of 'Pentecostalism' to refer to the movement in general and the uncapitalised form 'pentecostal' to refer inclusively to its classical, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal forms.[21] Wolfgang Vondey emphasises that Pentecostalism by its very nature cannot be static but remains subject to spiritual formation, imagination, and is a 'transitional' phenomenon which is not a human organisation but the work of the Holy Spirit.[22] Allan Anderson defines the term 'Pentecostal' as a broad and inclusive category 'for describing globally all churches and movements that emphasise the workings of the gifts of the Spirit'.[23] He also questions whether 'Pentecostalism' is an appropriate term to use today and suggests that it is probably more correct to speak of 'Pentecostalisms' in the contemporary global context as it refers to a wide variety of movements scattered throughout the world. According to Anderson, there are thousands of different Pentecostal denominations and movements throughout the globe which may have diverse features, but they can still be described as Pentecostal in character, theology and ethos.[24] He also describes 'charismatics' as those who practice spiritual gifts in the mainline Catholic and Protestant denominations and all others who practice spiritual gifts.[25]

What follows is an analysis of these Pentecostal characteristics and to trace the complex historical developments that led to the emergence of the Pentecostal movement in the UK which is the context for this research.

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[21] Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh; Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), pp.18-20.
[22] Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), p.12.
[23] Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism, 2nd Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.13-14.
[24] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.15.
[25] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.14.

1.7.2 Characteristics of Pentecostalism

There are a number of distinctive characteristics of Pentecostal beliefs, practices and spirituality which are worth noting as they provide a religious context for understanding the ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death in the study. According to Anderson, the key feature of Pentecostal theology is the emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit and being 'filled' or "baptized" with the Holy Spirit.[26] Vondey adds that Pentecostal theology may begin with the Spirit and from there, submits to the range of experiences which includes testimony, proclamation, prayer, song and dance. Pentecostals strongly assert the belief in the existence of 'spiritual gifts' which according to Kydd, are bestowed by the Spirit on believers and the Spirit also manifests himself in those gifts which include prophecy and speaking in tongues.[27]

Vondey claims that the framework used most consistently for narrating the set of Pentecostal experiences is the so-called 'full-gospel' which emerged historically as a four or fivefold pattern borrowed from the Wesleyan 'holiness' tradition.[28] The fivefold pattern proclaims the good news that Jesus Christ brings (1) salvation, (2) sanctification, (3) baptism in the Spirit, (4) divine healing, and (5) the impending arrival of the kingdom of God. [29] In terms of the future Kingdom of God, Steven Land identifies eschatology as the 'driving force and galvanising vision' of Pentecostalism.[30] As an alternative, Grant McClung identifies *mission* as the key feature of Pentecostalism as Pentecostals tend to be passionate about mission and

[26] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.25
[27] R.A.N Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984), pp.85-96.
[28] A. B. Simpson, *The Four-Fold Gospel* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1890).
[29] Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), p.21
[30] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p.62.

view it as an urgent task. [31] Both Land's and McClung's views can be reconciled on the basis that the mission work of Pentecostals is largely driven by their eschatology.

Andre Droogers has outlined three broad but common features of global Pentecostalism that include what might be termed as theological categories: (1) the central emphasis on the experience of the Spirit, accompanied by ecstatic manifestations such as glossolalia; (2) the 'born again' or conversion experience that accompanies acceptance into a Pentecostal community; and (3) the dualistic worldview that distinguishes between the 'world' and the 'church', the 'devil' and the divine.[32] It is this dualistic worldview in relation to theologies of death that is being displayed by many participants in this research as they articulate diverse beliefs.

Walter Hollenweger emphasises the inspiration and authority of the Bible and the Pentecostals view that the bible is the most important source of information concerning God.[33] For R. Jerome Boone, the importance of the church community and a belief that a major guide in determining one's lifestyle remains on the fellowship with other believers and regular practical teachings from one's local church are key characteristics. [34] While it is the pastor who leads the congregation and preaches by the leading of the Holy Spirit, Hunston points out that Pentecostals also emphasise the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers'. This means that potentially all believers including lay members are gifted to contribute to the life of the church

[31] L. G. McClung, "Spontaneous Strategy of the Spirit: Pentecostal Missionary Practices," in McClung (ed.), *Azusa Street and Beyond*, pp.71-84.
[32] Andre Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," in Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Frantani (eds.) *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, (Bloomington: IUP, 2001), pp.44-46.
[33] Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972) p. 291.
[34] R.J. Boone, "Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation," *JPT* Vol 8 (1996), pp.129-42 (131).

as a charismatic community.[35] This feature is relevant in chapter 6 in terms of who is involved in the organising of a funeral.

According to Warrington, Pentecostals expect an encounter with God both within personal and corporate gatherings which undergirds much of their worship and theology.[36] Joel Edwards adds that the central feature of Pentecostal meetings is that worship tends to be an expressive, free, improvised worship, in the sense that there is not a liturgical framework.[37] Daniel Albrecht concludes that for Pentecostals, 'In a real sense all worship is responsive'. In other words, their spirituality is characterized by a readiness to respond to God particularly through expressions of praise. [38] As a driver of acts of praise, Yong writes of 'the centrality of music in Pentecostal praxis' and congregational singing is the backbone of Pentecostal worship.[39] The centrality of music and singing is also highlighted in the context of black Pentecostal funeral and grave-side services which is discussed in chapter 7.

Land identifies prayer as 'the primary theological activity of Pentecostals - the most significant activity of the Pentecostal congregation.[40] Kärkkäinen points to corporate 'testimonies' an integral part of Pentecostal worship in which believers relate to how God has affected or influence their lives.[41] Cartledge highlights a key Pentecostal belief in divine healing as a legitimate expression for the ministry of the church mediated through the power of the Holy Spirit. [42] Healing is not only expected for physical or mental conditions but Pentecostals also

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[35] R Hunston, "The Church-the Body of Christ," in Brewster, *Pentecostal Doctrine*, pp. 139-48
[36] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.29.
[37] Joel Edwards, *Let's Praise Him Again* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1992), pp.68-70.
[38] Daniel E. Albrecht, "An Anatomy of Worship: A Pentecostal Analysis," in Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies (eds.), *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler* (London: T& T Clark, 2004), pp.71-72.
[39] Amos Yong, "Academic Glossolalia? Pentecostal Scholarship, Multi-Disciplinarily, and the Science-Religion Conversion," *JPT* Vol 14.1 (2005), pp.61-80.
[40] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p.166.
[41] Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, p.5
[42] Mark. Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp.199-214.

believe in the possibility of deliverance or exorcism from demonic forces. They accept the existence of Satan and the demonic realm and the need for them to be resisted through prayer, obedience and other strategies of spiritual warfare.[43] There is an in depth discussion about the demonic realm with the context of 'community with the dead' in chapter 6.

In terms of how Pentecostals historically relate to the wider Christian community, early Pentecostal leaders in the twentieth century rejected either institutional affiliation or any other form of ecumenism with traditional mainline churches such as Anglicans and Methodists. According to Blumhofer, until the 1940s American Pentecostalism was relatively isolated from mainline churches. One of the important reasons for this response was the cultivation of the sense of Pentecostals being separated and alienated from the dominant culture of the West, which included mainline churches. However, not only Pentecostal churches were rejected by or distanced themselves from mainline churches, some Pentecostal denominations also distanced themselves from each other, such as Trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals. [44]

Many Pentecostal churches exhibited tendencies that produced a unique form of Pentecostalism through promoting 'fundamental truths and doctrines'.[45] Evangelical 'fundamentalists' who originated in the nineteenth century are described by Anderson as 'text-orientated believers' as they endorse the 'fundamentals' of the Christian faith, with an emphasis on a literal interpretation of the Bible, personal holiness and the rejection of secular culture and scientific modernity.[46] According to David Bebbington, some Pentecostal churches were influenced by

[43] C.H Kraft, "Spiritual Warfare: A Neocharismatics Perspective," in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, pp.1091 – 1096.
[44] Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism, Volume 2- Since 1941,* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), pp.13-14.
[45] Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God,* pp.14-15.
[46] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* pp.259-261.

the fundamentalist movement by advocating pietism and reverence for the literal interpretation of the Bible.[47] However, Anderson points out that early Pentecostals were quite unlike fundamentalists on the basis that they steered away from the dogmatic elements of this movement and have rejected formal affiliation with fundamentalists.[48] After 1945, Pentecostals moved towards the mainstream and modifications were made to the relevant doctrinal statements and fundamentalistic tendencies were softened or removed.[49] There is a textual analysis of doctrinal statements of several denominations in chapters 4 and 5 with regard to Pentecostal theologies of death and eschatology.

1.7.3 Typology of Pentecostalism

In terms of typology, Pentecostalism is divided into at least five categories. These typologies are not mutually exclusive however they serve as a useful tool in identifying the different types of Pentecostal denominations and churches which feature in this study. These include the following:

1.7.3.1 Classical Pentecostals

According to Robeck, Pentecostalism in the twentieth century fell into historical phases and the first is *classical* Pentecostalism.[50] Classical Pentecostals originated in the early twentieth century revival and holiness movements in North America before extending to the rest of the globe beginning with Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Africa.[51] Classical

[47] David Bebbington & David Ceri Jones, *Evangelism & Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.1-2.
[48] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* p.260.
[49] Bebbington & Jones, *Evangelism & Fundamentalism*, pp.326-327.
[50] Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.32.
[51] J. R Williams, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," in Burgess, & van Der Mass, The *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements,* pp.354-363.

Pentecostals can be divided into the subtypes: 'Holiness', 'Finished Work', and 'Oneness' Pentecostals.

'Holiness Pentecostalism' has its roots in the nineteenth-century North American holiness movement and the belief in the doctrine of the second work of grace called 'sanctification', followed by the third work of grace of Spirit Baptism.[52] The original Church of God and the Church of God (Cleveland) are Holiness Pentecostal denominations which have branches in the UK, albeit under the different names of New Testament Church of God and Church of God of Prophecy respectively, both of which feature in this study.

'Finished Work Pentecostals' originated from the largest group of white-majority Pentecostals in the early twentieth century.[53] This includes the Assemblies of God (AOG) which is the world's largest Pentecostal denomination.[54] One of the churches in this research based in Birmingham UK is an AOG denomination

'Oneness' Pentecostalism resulted from another division which occurred in 1916 over disagreement about the doctrine of the Trinity.[55] The beliefs and practices that are fundamental to Oneness Pentecostals include the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity while reaffirming the deity of Christ. They also affirm the singular name 'Jesus' as being the proper and only name of God and for water baptism is to be administered in the name as Jesus only.[56] According to Anderson, the Oneness Pentecostals in the UK tended to be black British Apostolic groups

[52] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.17.
[53] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," pp.17-18.
[54] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.17.
[55] Thomas A. Fudge, *Christianity without the Cross: A History of Salvation in Oneness Pentecostalism* (Parkland, Florida: Universal Publishers, 2003) pp.45-49.
[56] Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.52.

with roots in the Caribbean.[57] Oneness Pentecostals are not featured in this research as the focus is on Trinitarian Pentecostals only as they form the vast majority of Pentecostals in the UK.

1.7.3.2 Older Independent and Spirit Churches

According to Anderson, older Independent and Spirit Churches includes churches in China, India and sub-Saharan Africa. These churches are referred to by different terms although most of these independent churches prefer to be known as 'churches of the Spirit'. In West Africa 'spiritual', 'prophet healing,' and 'aladura' (praying) churches emerged in the healing revival movements during the early decades of the twentieth century. In the early stages of their formation, some of these churches were in direct contact with classical Pentecostals. Anderson points out that although these churches would not be considered to be *classical,* they are at least *inclined* to be Pentecostal.[58]

1.7.3.3 Older Church Charismatics

The Charismatic movement began in the 1960s affecting the Protestant mainline churches and the Roman Catholic Church. According to Anderson, the Charismatic movement is thought to have begun in the United States in 1960 and spread rapidly to Germany, the United Kingdom and France. Catholic Charismatics in particular make up a large percentage of the total numbers of Charismatics given in statistics. These movements remain established in mainline churches and often approach the subject of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts from a sacramental perspective.[59] Charismatics do not feature in this research as the focus is on churches and

[57] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* p.50.
[58] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," pp.18-19.
[59] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.19.

denominations who regard themselves as fundamentally Pentecostal in character, theology and ethos.

1.7.3.4 Neo-Pentecostal Churches

The early neo-Pentecostal churches emerged around the world in the 1970s and 1980s from the charismatic renewal within the mainline churches.[60] These are often regarded as Charismatic independent churches and are influenced by both classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement. Most of these churches emerged from the 1970s onward and include the 'Word of Faith' churches and similar churches which place emphasis on healing and material prosperity. Hunt also includes the emergence of distinctive new Pentecostal Churches from West Africa in the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in this category.[61] Pentecostalism has experienced spectacular growth in Nigeria with diverse proliferations of churches which has carved out a distinctive Nigerian Christianity.[62] One of the case studies in this research is the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which is the largest Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria with multiple branches in the UK. Although it was founded in 1952, it went through significant changes in the 1980s and bears a closer resemblance to the neo-Pentecostal churches than it does to the earlier African independent churches.[63]

In Britain neo-Pentecostals have their origins in the Charismatic renewal movement amongst mainline churches in the 1960s and 1970s. The New Wine network falls into this category. It was established in the 1980s and shares a broadly Pentecostal ethos and theology of the Spirit

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[60] Robeck, Jr and Yong (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, p.32.
[61] Steven Hunt, "The New Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain," a paper presented at CESNUR 14th International Conference, Riga, Latvia, 29-31 August 29-31 2000.
[62] Babatunde Adedibu, *Coat of Many Colours: The Origin, Growth, Distinctiveness and Contributions of Black Majority Churches to British Christianity* (Gloucester: The Choir Press, 2012), p.69.
[63] Asonzeh Ukah, *A New Paradigm of Pentecostal Power. A Study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008).

but members have remained in the mainline denominations.[64] According to William Kay, not all Charismatics stayed within the mainline denominations. Some left for the 'new wineskins' of Apostolic networks centred on a group of prominent leaders such as New Frontiers.[65] He also makes the point that Apostolic networks are a restorationist movement which are centred around the guiding ministry of an apostle and built on the idea that the church needed to be restored to the glory of the early church.[66]

The Pentecostal and Charismatic scholar, Peter Wagner, used the term the 'New Apostolic Reformation' (NAR) to describe churches in the 1990s that typically endorse an apostolic leadership model which integrates the 'five-fold ministry' of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. NAR churches throughout the world are not organised within a formal membership or association but are a loose collection of independent churches who share similar characteristics and doctrines.[67] Restoration Fellowship Ministries was launched in Birmingham in 2007 led by Dr Carol Tomlin and now has two branches in Birmingham and Leeds.[68] RFM describe themselves as a 'New Apostolic church' which endorses the five-fold ministry offices. They share some of the NAR characteristics and teaching.

Neo-Pentecostal churches also include church movements such as Vineyard and Calvary Chapel.[69] The Vineyard movement, which originated in the United States in the 1980s, was

[64] Andrew Davies, "Heritage and Hope: A Story of British Pentecostalism," in Joe Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology* (London: SCM Press, 2019), p.4.
[65] Williams Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (London: Paternoster, 2007).
[66] Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain,* pp.20-21.
[67] C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake: How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking up the Church as We Know it* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1999).
[68] Restoration Fellowship Ministries, http://rfmchurches.com/about-us/who-we-are/ accessed 14 October 2019.
[69] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," p.19.

founded by John Wimber who was very influential in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s.[70] As Vineyard churches are not fundamentally Pentecostal, they are not included in this research; however, some of their teachings have influenced Pentecostal churches in the UK.

1.7.4 History of the Pentecostal movement in Britain

1.7.4.1 Holiness teaching and early revival meetings

The Pentecostal movement within Britain can be traced to the influence of American holiness preachers, Robert and Hannah Pearsall Smith who came to the Keswick Convention, Oxford in 1875.[71] This distinctive message emphasised 'holiness by faith' which is explained as holiness which is surrendered to the will of God and results in practical changes to the character and lifestyle of the believer. At the Convention it was also established that there was a Christian experience subsequent to conversion by which the believer might gain holiness. This doctrine stemmed from the tradition of Wesleyan holiness teaching.[72] Daniel Akhzemea argues that the holiness movement in America may have produced the first Pentecostals in the world, including Britain, but they were they were not described as 'Pentecostals' before 1901. According to Akhzemea, Robert and Hannah Pearsall Smith had an impact on the development of the early British Pentecostal movement which embraced some of their holiness teaching.[73] According to Michael McClymond, despite this American influence, the first wave of Pentecostalism in Britain followed a different path than North America. Rather than creating a

[70] Roger Foster, "The Rise of the Charismatic movement in the UK," in Joe Aldred, *Pentecostals and Charismatics: An Anthology* (London: SMC Press, 2019), p.44; Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: History of the Vineyard* (Anaheim, CA: Vineyard, 1999).
[71] William K. Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Publishing, 2000), p.5.
[72] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, pp.6-7.
[73] Daniel Akhazemea, "Pentecostal Diversity in England and the Wider UK," in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics*, pp.77-78.

new church movement there was a charismatic renewal of the existing mainline churches in Britain who simply added to their theology the baptism of the Holy Spirit with glossolalia.[74]

Whilst examining the literature on the history of the classical Pentecostal churches in Britain it is evident that many can trace their roots to the first wave of Pentecostalism within Britain to a period before the First World War (1914-18) which launched the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Church in Britain.[75] According to Kay, in 1904 the Welsh revival led by Evan Roberts, a Calvinist Methodist/holiness preacher, resulted in the spread of the Pentecostal experience through the Welsh churches. Roberts visited Keswick in 1906 and it is likely that he was influenced by teaching and worship experience that took place there.[76] Roberts began his ministry holding missions in North Wales and during the prayer groups that were organised Roberts encouraged the new ecstatic experience he described as 'baptism of the Spirit'. Whilst the Welsh revival was not a Pentecostal revival some of the Pentecostal pioneers were converted during the revival (for example, George Jeffreys and Daniel Williams, the founders of the Elim Pentecostal Church and Apostolic Church respectively). Therefore, this revival had a major influence on the emergence of British Pentecostalism in the early nineteenth century.[77] Anderson also notes that Alexander Boddy (1854-1930), an Anglican vicar in Sunderland, invited Barratt to preach in his parish in March 1907. Many of the people who gathered received the experience of Spirit Baptism at Barratt's meetings in Sunderland and Boddy's church became the most significant early Pentecostal centre in Britain.[78] The Welsh revival continued sporadically until 1906 after which the public interest subsided and church

[74] Michael J. McClymond, "Charismatic renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism: From North American origins to Global permutations" in Robeck, Jr and Yong (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, p.33.
[75] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.xiii.
[76] William Kay, "Marks of British Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches," in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics: An Anthology*, p.53.
[77] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* p.99.
[78] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* p.99.

attendance in many chapels dropped back to its old pre-revival level. Kay notes that the first Pentecostal denomination to be formed was the Apostolic Faith Church in Bournemouth in 1908 and in 1916, it broke free from the parent body in the USA to form its own Apostolic church which continues until this day.[79]

Around the same period Pentecostal revivals were being experienced around the world in particular in the west coast of the United States in Azusa Street, Los Angeles led by William Seymour. A similar pattern emerged in Britain as Pentecostalism began as an evangelistic or revivalist movement which was spurred on by eschatological beliefs resulting in the gospel message being preached with urgency before the imminent return of Christ.[80]

According to the Pentecostal historian Donald Gee, the Sunderland Conventions (1908 - 1914) had a profound influence in the early life of the Pentecostal movement. These conventions were organised and publicised by Alexander Boddy (1854-1930). Boddy is considered as a propagator of early Pentecostalism in Britain through his writings and by his conventions. He was initially an advocate of 'speaking in tongues' as the primary sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit but later appears to have modified his stance by stressing the importance of 'divine love'. His vision was also for a revised and unified church rather than for a new and separate Pentecostal denomination.[81] However, these conventions brought together the key individuals who later founded the three main early Pentecostal denominations in Britain – Apostolic Church, the Elim Pentecostal Church (EPC) and the Assemblies of God (AOG).[82] EPC and

[79] Kay, "Marks of British Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches," in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics: An Anthology*, p.54.
[80] Kay, *Pentecostalism*, p.247.
[81] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, pp.14-15.
[82] Bebbington & Jones, *Evangelism & Fundamentalism*, p.310.

AOG are two of the denominations that feature in this research. Therefore what follows is a more detailed discussion of their history and background.[83]

1.7.4.2 Elim Pentecostal Church (EPC)

The EPC became a denomination through the inspiration and leadership of George Jeffreys (1889-1962) who is regarded as the greatest British evangelist of the twentieth century.[84] He was born in the late nineteenth century in South Wales and his Christian conversion was affected by the Welsh revival. George Jeffreys and his brother Stephen Jeffreys preached wherever they were invited to go and lit the sparks of revival in South Wales.[85] The Jeffreys's were invited by Boddy to speak at the Sunderland Convention in 1913.[86] George Jeffreys was eventually invited to Ireland to plant a group of churches where he took up permanent evangelistic work. He met with Irish friends and together they formed a group called the Elim Evangelistic Band in Belfast in 1915.

Initially, the Elim Evangelistic Band was set up as a revivalist agency with ecumenical intentions towards evangelicals and other free churches. As the campaigns continued and new converts began to look for places to worship it was inevitable that new Elim churches would become their natural home.[87] The first EPC was established in Belfast in 1916. They gradually began to plant Pentecostal congregations in the more English and Scottish parts of Northern Ireland. In 1918, the Elim Pentecostal Alliance Council was formed to oversee the

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[83] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.13.
[84] Malcolm R. Hathaway (1998), "The Elm Pentecostal Church: Origins, Development and Distinctives," in Keith Warrington (ed.), *Pentecostal Perspectives* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press), p.10.
[85] Kay, *Pentecostalism*, pp.87-88.
[86] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.21.
[87] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.21.

administration of the church and by 1920 there were 15 new EPC's in existence.[88] The first EPC in England was formed in 1921.[89]

The development of beliefs of Jeffreys can be charted in the *Elim Evangel,* the official journal of EPC which was first published in 1919. EPC's 'Ten Fundamental Truths', the core doctrines of the church, was published in 1923. This included putting belief in the Scriptures first rather than religious experience.[90] As the founder of EPC, George Jeffrey became the President of the Executive Council for life. However, E. J. Philips (1893-1973), who was appointed as the Secretary of the Executive in 1923, was considered as the bureaucratic leader through whom most of the important lines of communication ran. This led to a conflict between Jeffreys and Philips on theological and ecclesiological grounds which included Jeffrey's perpetuation of the belief in British Israelism in the late 1920s.[91] At the end of the dispute, Jeffreys resigned from EPC in 1940.[92] Despite the loss of its gifted leader, EPC continued to grow gradually in the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, EPC was affected by the charismatic movement and worship styles became more liberated and religious legalism relaxed.[93]

1.7.4.3 Assemblies of God (AOG)

AOG is the largest and most affluent Pentecostal denomination in the world today.[94] The origins of AOG can be traced to the pioneering work of William Durham. In 1873 Durham was

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[88] Kay, *Pentecostalism*, pp.89-90.
[89] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.21.
[90] Bebbington & Jones, *Evangelism & Fundamentalism*, p.312.
[91] This is the belief that the then lost tribes of Israel found their way to Britain and that the British people and their empire, manifested the blessings that has been promised to the Jewish people, Bebbington & Jones, *Evangelism & Fundamentalism*, p.314.
[92] Kay, *Pentecostalism*, p.91.
[93] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.26.
[94] E L. Blumhofer & C. R Armstrong, "Assembles of God," in Burgess, & van Der Mass (eds.), The *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, p.333.

called into ministry shortly after his conversion in 1898. He preached salvation, sanctification and healing in an independent mission in Chicago. After receiving the infilling of the Holy Spirit at the Azusa Street revival he began to articulate what he called 'the Finished Work of Calvary'. This doctrine advocated that sanctification was not a 'second blessing' but was received at conversion when a person is born again and cleansed from their sins. Therefore, Durham taught a 'two-stage' work of grace (justification and Spirit baptism) instead of a 'three-stage one'.[95] Durham died in 1912 at the age of thirty-nine, however, his 'Finished Work' doctrine and other views continued to gain acceptance which eventually was incorporated in the official doctrines of the AOG when it was organised in 1914.[96]

The formation of the AOG in April 1914 spread around the globe and greatly influenced the development of the Pentecostal movement in the UK. The Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland (AGGBI) was founded in 1924 and was formed independently of the AOG in North America.[97] Nelson Parr (1886-1976) attended the Sunderland Convention around 1910 after hearing about the outpouring of the Spirit in Los Angeles. After speaking in tongues himself, Parr was almost certainly influenced by the developments taking place in the United States after the formation of the AOG in 1914. Also, in 1922 W.F.P Burton (1886-1971) attempted to bring together many of the scattered Pentecostal assemblies into a loose federation, partly for providing support for missionaries, which led to the Sheffield Conference.[98] In 1923 Parr invited leaders to 'establish a union of Assemblies' while preserving the autonomy of the local assembly. A gathering was arranged in Aston, Birmingham in 1924 during which Parr was

[95] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* pp. 46-47.
[96] Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God,* p.128-130.
[97] Blumhofer & Armstrong, "Assembles of God," p.340.
[98] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.28.

elected chairman. He had in mind a British fellowship patterned on the American AOG.[99] In contrast to the EPC, AGGBI drew together a group of independent congregations who did not want to submit themselves to the central organisation that EPC was putting together.[100] The Fundamental Truths adopted by this Union included reference to 'the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the initial evidence of which is speaking with other tongues'. This was written into the foundation documents of AOG. This doctrine was considered very similar to the doctrine of Spirit baptism espoused by the EPC.[101] Thirty-seven assembles in England and Wales and Monmouth joined the Union in 1924 and thus the AGGBI was established. The number of assemblies increased from 140 in 1927 to 506 in 1957. The minimal administration of AGGBI was carried on through the national offices in London and then Luton until 1953. In 1981, the national offices moved to Nottingham, where they remain today.[102] Like the EPC, AGGBI was affected by the charismatic movement in the 1960s which spurred further growth.[103]

1.7.5. Black Pentecostals

Steven Land draws attention to the fact that two thirds of Pentecostalism is now in the developing World, three-quarters are Black or Asian which means only a quarter of its members are white Pentecostals. This study reflects this global and local Pentecostal landscape as majority of the churches represented are BMC's.[104]

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[99] Blumhofer & Armstrong, "Assembles of God," p.340.
[100] Bebbington & Jones, *Evangelism & Fundamentalism*, p.315.
[101] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, pp.28-29.
[102] Blumhofer & Armstrong, "Assembles of God," p.341.
[103] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.30.
[104] Donald E. Miller, Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (London: University of California Press, 2007), pp.15-20.

1.7.5.1 Global Black Pentecostal Movement

The two key strands of the Black global Pentecostal movement are African American and African Pentecostals. In terms of the history of African American Pentecostals, Alexander points out that William Seymour, the black pioneer for the Pentecostal movement, spearheaded the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles (1906-1911).[105] The African-American pastor and scholar, Charles R. Fox, who co-authored *William J. Seymour, Pioneer of the Azusa Street Revival* with Vinson Synan, makes the point that this revival fuelled the urgency of mission service by Pentecostal churches and the first Pentecostals saw the coming of Christ as the prime motivation for the urgency task of preparing the world for the final judgment.[106] It was through the leadership of Seymour that the message of the modern Pentecostal revival was first broadcast worldwide and emerged as a global phenomenon. The Azusa Street revival was significant in terms of its global impact, but it was not unique as other revivals emerged independently around the same period in other parts of the world such as Wales and North Korea. Thus, it was part of a broader reawakening of a Pentecostal movement which was closely aligned with the New Testament Pentecostalism.[107] However, Allan Anderson suggests that Pentecostalism is a missionary movement which was a catalyst for its global expansion from the beginning of the twentieth century.[108]

Leaders of a number of African American Holiness churches came into contact with the Azusa Street Revival. These included Charles Mason, the founder of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). When Mason visited the revival and accepted the Pentecostal message, he

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[105] Alexander, *Black Fire*, pp.126 -127.
[106] Vinson Syan & Charles R. Fox, *William J. Seymour, Pioneer of the Azusa Street Revival* (Alachua, Florida: Bridge Logos, 2012), pp.89-93.
[107] Andrew Davies, "Heritage and Hope: A Story of British Pentecostalism" in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology*, p.8.
[108] Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.2.

experienced Spirit Baptism accompanied by speaking in tongues. The denomination that Mason went on to build became the COGIC, the largest African American Pentecostal denomination in the world.[109] This urgency of the end-times was carried through to the whole organisation as COGIC which assumed their role in this end-time mission to proclaim the gospel to every nation throughout the world to usher in the second coming of Christ.[110]

With regard to African classical Pentecostals, according to Anderson, some of the first missionaries from Azusa Street where African Americans who went to Liberia in 1907 but early attempts were unsuccessful.[111] The first Pentecostal missionary enterprise to West Africa involved the leadership of a number of black women from the mid-1920s from the COGIC and AOG who started missions in the coastal regions of Liberia. However, it was through the leadership of the Ghanaian, Peter Anim (1890-1984) in Ghana, and David Odubanjo and Joseph Babalola in Nigeria who spurred the initial growth of the West African churches in the 1920s and 1930s. Eventually, these West African churches became affiliated to the British Apostolic Church.[112] Subsequently, many Apostolic church members in Ghana broke away from the British Apostolic Church to form the Church of Pentecost. The main classical Pentecostal denominations in West Africa today are the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, and the AOG and Apostolic Church in Nigeria.

1.7.5.2 The Black Majority Churches in Britain

Mark Sturge identifies five categories of African and Caribbean churches that could be included under the label 'Black Majority Church' (BMC) in Britain: (i) BMCs within the

[109]Alexander, *Black Fire*, pp.124 -125.
[110] Kalu, "Early African American Charismatic Missions and Pentecostal-Charismatic Engagements with the African Motherland," pp.221-222.
[111] Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.114.
[112] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p.117.

White-led Pentecostal denominations; (ii) Churches emerging from the Caribbean diaspora; (iii) Churches emerging from the African diaspora; (iv) BMCs within the historic denominations; (v) African and Caribbean Spiritual churches.[113] This research is only concerned with the first three categories in relation to the Pentecostal movement in Britain.

In terms of Black Majority Churches within the White-led Pentecostal denominations; the number of BMCs in these White-led denominations has accelerated since the 1980s. Denominations included in this category are AOG and EPC. According to Sturge, one of the key differences and criticism of these denominations is that their structures often fail to elevate BME leaders and to include them on their executive boards. However, it does appear to be the case that fewer Black Christians are paying attention to the label of the churches or denominations they attend and whether they are Black or White-led churches.[114] There are two WLCs in this study which are both EPC. One EPC with a black majority, white-led congregation is located in an urban multi-ethnic area of Birmingham (Elim (B'ham). The other has a white majority congregation which is located in a suburban area of Staffordshire.

In terms of Pentecostal Churches emerging from the Caribbean diaspora, according to Babatunde Adedibu, the immigration history of Caribbean churches in Britain changed with the docking of the *Empire Windrush* ship at Tilbury from Jamaica on 22 June 1948 carrying 492 migrants. The 'Windrush generation' endured racial, social and economic ostracism in Britain and the failure of historic denominations in Britain to integrate members of the Caribbean countries into their churches contributed to the emergence of Caribbean Pentecostal churches in Britain. They established churches which were first called 'West Indian churches',

[113] Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has done! An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2005), p.53.
[114] Sturge, *Look what the Lord has done!*, pp.54-55.

then ‘Afro-Caribbean churches’ and now ‘African Caribbean churches.’ The new Pentecostal churches initially held services in living rooms, kitchens and church halls which became socio-cultural as well as sacred spaces to foster unity and dignity of Caribbean diasporans.[115] The earliest church on record to be established was the Calvary Church of God in Christ which started in 1952.

Other churches in this category include the New Testament Church of God and Church of God of Prophecy both originally known as the Church of God (COG). COG originated with the revival meetings consisting of a band of twenty or so members who met together at the Holiness Church at Camp Creek from 1902 in Tennessee, North Carolina.[116] Towards the end of 1904 Tomlinson moved his family to Cleveland, Tennessee and at the second Annual General Assembly in 1907 the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) was officially formed.[117] In 1909 COG created its first administrative office by appointing Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson to the position of ‘General Overseer’, for the ‘full-time supervision of the affairs of the church’. The General Assembly of 1916 created a council of 12 men, called the ‘Elders Council’, in order to ‘care for the affairs of the church between its general assemblies’.[118]

There was a bitter dispute between Tomlinson who wanted a theocratic government in place and other members of the Elders Council who wanted the General Assembly to be more of a centralised legislative body to govern local churches. There was also a dispute about Tomlinson’s autocratic style of leadership.[119] This eventually led to Tomlinson stepping down

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[115] Babatunde Adedibu, “African and Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain,” in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics: An Anthology*, p.23.
[116] John Stone, *The Church of God of Prophecy: History & Polity* (Tennessee: White Wing Publishing House, 1977), pp.16-22.
[117] Stone, *The Church of God of Prophecy*, pp.25-26.
[118] C. W Conn, “Church of God (Cleveland, TN),” in Burgess, & van Der Mass. (eds.), The *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* p.531.
[119] Conn, “Church of God (Cleveland, TN)”, p.532.

and being replaced as General Overseer in 1923. Tomlinson led a break-away group which resulted in a split in the church with both factions using the name 'Church of God'.[120]

A.J. Tomlinson's separate church group continued to be called the *original* Church of God which grew from around three hundred members in the USA to almost ten thousand members in twenty countries from 1923 to 1943.[121] It grew rapidly through good organisation and steady leadership from 1920s onward, first in the USA and then in over 155 countries of the world, including the Caribbean. It was from the Caribbean that the Church of God was carried to Britain amongst the West Indian immigrants in the 1950s.[122] Oliver Lyseight pastored the first congregation within the *original* Church of God in 1942 in Wolverhampton; however, they adopted the name New Testament Church of God. According to a report in the *Church of God Evangel* by 1957 there were 150 members in five churches, with Handsworth being the largest.[123]

Subsequently, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) in Britain changed its name to Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) in order to distinguish it from the other branch of COG that formed in Britain called the New Testament Church of God. However, this name does not indicate separateness of practice of doctrine from Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee).[124] Church of God of Prophecy in Britain places emphasis on entire sanctification as a definite experience occurring after salvation — 'the doctrine of perfection'.[125] In his book about the history of the COGOP, Miles points out that the Midlands became the centre for COGOP and

[120] Stone, *The Church of God of Prophecy*, pp.42-49.
[121] Stone, *The Church of God of Prophecy*, p.54.
[122] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.32.
[123] *Church of God Evangel* (October 1957) cited in Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.33.
[124] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, p.34.
[125] Stone, *The Church God of Prophecy*, pp.93-96.

NTCOG and this is where most of their important activities and conferences where held and both had similar structures, governance and doctrine.[126]

In terms of Pentecostal Churches emerging from the African Diaspora, Adedibu points out that in the 1960s and 1970s, Black Pentecostal growth in Britain was mainly identifiable as Caribbean, but from the 1990s this changed with the proliferation of immigration from Africa.[127] There were broadly two main waves of African diaspora churches in Britain, which followed the Caribbean churches. The first wave can be traced back to the 1970s with the transplanting of the home-grown African Initiated Churches (AICs). Their development is largely attributable to students coming from the African continent to study at colleges and Universities in Britain, especially Nigerians, Ghanaians and Sierra Leonians.[128] The emergence of the first churches in Britain included the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and Christ Apostolic Church,[129] established by Nigerians in London. According to Anderson, the first wave also consisted of Aladura-type churches emerged from West Africa to the UK as healing revival movements in the 1960s and 1970s.[130] The second wave consisted of neo-Pentecostal churches who organised themselves into fellowships in the UK from the 1980s. A surge of growth took place as the result of many second-generation children who were born in the UK choosing to remain due to their upwardly socially mobile aspirations. The wave of church planting involved mainly African neo-Pentecostals from Nigeria and Ghana.[131] This arose partly as a result of the political and social instability of many countries in Africa where

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[126] B. Miles, *When the Church of God Arises: History of the development of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Midlands and more widely in Britain* (Studley, Warwickshire: History into Print, 2006), pp.47-68.
[127] Adedibu, "African and Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain," p.25.
[128] Adedibu, *Coats of Many Colours*, p.64.
[129] F. Ludwig, "The Proliferation of Cherubim and Seraphim Congregation in Britain," in A. Adogame and C. Weisskoppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, Bayreuth African Studies Series No. 75 (Bayreuth: Breitinger, 2005), p.346.
[130] Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," pp.18-19.
[131] Burgess, "African Pentecostal Growth," p.129.

their parents came from.[132] Like their Caribbean counterparts a decade earlier, African migrants encountered discrimination, cultural differences and unfamiliar church styles in British and Caribbean-led churches.[133]

The largest church to emerge from the African diaspora is the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). RCCG was founded in Nigeria in 1952 by Josiah Akindayomi. In 1981 Enoch Adejare Adeboye, a former university lecturer, became the General Overseer following the death of the founder. In 1988 RCCG began in Britain as a London-based house fellowship. This eventually led to the planting of its flagship congregation, Jesus House, in North London in 1994 which ushered in a period of rapid expansion, especially among the Nigerian community in the South-east of Britain. From a small, localised denomination in Nigeria it has become a movement of global significance making and is one of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches in the world. According to African Pentecostal scholar, Richard Burgess, one of the reasons for its popularity among African immigrants is its holistic concept of salvation, which includes holiness, healing, deliverance and prosperity teaching.[134]

By 2009 RCCG had planted churches in 68% of Britain's cities in pursuit of the fulfilment of their vision to plant churches '… within five minutes driving distance in every city and town of developed countries'.[135] However, there remains a considerable disparity in terms of the cultural orientation within RCCG UK. RCCG membership remains predominately Nigerian and the flexibility of the RCCG's Pentecostal spirituality has proved insufficient to break down

[132] Sturge, *Look what the Lord has done!*, p.54.
[133] Richards Burgess, "African Pentecostal Growth: The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain" in Goodhew & Burgess (eds.), *Church Growth in Britain*, pp.128.
[134] Burgess, "African Pentecostal Growth," pp.131-132.
[135] Burgess, "African Pentecostal Growth," p.135.

the cultural barrier between African and indigenous British society.[136] The RCCG is the fastest growing and one of the largest Pentecostal denomination in Britain and their 2017 estimated membership was approximately 62,000 [137] with over 850 parishes in the UK.[138]

1.8 Thesis outline

The remaining chapters in this thesis are summarized as follows. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant academic literature. Chapter 3 examines the methodology and research methods that were utilised to gather the empirical data to address the research questions. This includes assessing the tools of practical theology, empirical theology, ethnographic methods and critically discussing the research methods used in this study. There is also a discussion of the ethical issues that had to be addressed in this research.

Chapter 4 is the first of the four main analysis chapters. Each chapter involves a 'multi-voices dialogue' relating to selected theologies of death themes. Multi-vocal dialogue simply means dialogue integrating two or more of the 'Theology in Four Voices'. In the first part of chapter 4, the 'normative' voices are brought into dialogue with 'espoused' voices focusing on three theology of death themes. In the second part of chapter 4 a range of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal 'formal' theologies are also brought into dialogue. Chapter 5 is a continuation of chapter 4 focusing on the theme of 'community with the dead'. Scholarship with regards to African traditional religion is also brought into this discussion. Chapter 6 is an analysis of how espoused and operant voices, embedded in the practices associated with Pentecostal pre-funeral rituals, converge with or diverge from normative and formal theologies. The pre-funeral rituals

[136] Burgess, "African Pentecostal Growth," p.141.
[137] Adedibu, "African and Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain," in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics*, p.28.
[138] Redeemed Christian Church of God, "Our History," https://www.rccguk.church/our-history/ accessed 6 January 2020.

focus on three areas: funeral planning, wakes (also known as ‘nine-nights’) and superstitions. In chapter 7, there is an analysis of the empirical data gathered from the observations of the four funeral events I attended during the field research. The main aim is to determine to what extent ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death, as it relates to funeral rituals, converge with or diverge from formal or normative theologies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Introduction

This literature review is divided into three parts. The first part is a review of the literature relating to Pentecostal eschatology and theologies of death. The second part is a review of the literature relating to theologies of death arising from the wider Christian traditions from the patristic to the modern period. The third part is a review of literature relating to Black theologies together with African and Caribbean scholarship pertinent to this research.

2.2 Pentecostal eschatology and theologies of death

The primary aim of this research is to bring the normative and espoused voices into dialogue with the 'formal' theological Pentecostal scholarship. Keith Warrington is one of the leading British Pentecostal theologians and is a former lecturer at Regents Theological College in Malvern, the academic base of the Elim Pentecostal Church in the UK. His key publication for the purposes of this study is *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter*.[139] In this book Warrington does a comprehensive study into Pentecostal theology for the benefit of academics, clergy and lay people. There is a compilation of Pentecostal views of most sub-themes of systematic theology including ecclesiology, pneumatology, eschatology and other key themes which are brought into dialogue with ordinary theologies of death in this research. Another key scholar is Peter Althouse who has written on Pentecostal eschatology and pneumatology. His key publication for this research is *Spirit of the Last Days: Pentecostal Eschatology in*

[139] Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008)

Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann[140] and Althouse is a primary dialogue partner when it comes to the discussion about 'material continuation' in chapter 4.

There are other key theologians who feature in this research who are not situated in the Pentecostal tradition but are still regarded as key contributors to Pentecostal scholarship. One of them is Walter Hollenweger, a Swiss scholar from the Reformed Tradition who is considered as the 'founding father' of academic research into Pentecostalism. His research on global Pentecostalism revealed a vast diversity of distinctive Pentecostal beliefs including in relation to eschatology.[141]

In this research it was important to establish whether the participants were likely to share a *classical* Pentecostal view of eschatology in order to develop questions that would help them to focus on key aspects of theologies of death. In terms of the contribution of Pentecostal scholars towards classical Pentecostal eschatology, Warrington notes that from its very inception Pentecostalism in North America and Europe emerged as an *apocalyptic* movement with a focus on future dispensational eschatology, particularly the belief in the imminent second coming of Christ. Pentecostals also firmly believe in the 'second coming of Christ' and the belief that Jesus will literally and physically return to the earth for his millennial reign.[142] According to Althouse, classical Pentecostal theology has focused more on future apocalyptic aspects of eschatology rather than theologies of death.[143] Hollenweger explains that the reason why early Pentecostalism began with a future disposition of eschatology is because Pentecostalism is essentially eschatological at its roots. In fact, the Pentecostal movement was

[140] Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*.
[141] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p.5.
[142] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.314.
[143] Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, p.16-20.

birthed in the early 20th century in an atmosphere of fervent expectation of the imminent second coming of Christ.[144] Even prior to the Los Angeles Azusa Street revival (1906-11), the 'signs of the times' gave a sense amongst many Christian and non-Christians alike that the end of the world will be ushered in sometime around the turn of the twentieth century.[145]

Of course, the doctrine of the 'last things' and the belief in the second coming is not unique to Pentecostalism. This is one of the core tenets of belief of virtually all major Christian traditions and was firmly rooted in the Nicene Creed in the fourth century.[146] What distinguished early Pentecostal eschatology from mainstream Christianity was the belief in the *imminence* of the second coming, premillennialism and being able to predict the events prior to Christ's return. However, according to the Pentecostal scholar, David Faupel, these elements of eschatology did not originate with the early Pentecostal movement. The development of premillennialism can be largely attributed to the Scottish minister, Edward Irving, in the early nineteenth century.[147] Irving's pre-millennial and prophetic views concerning Israel had a profound influence over many Christian leaders which included a British figure named John Nelson Darby who developed the first comprehensive doctrine of dispensational premillennialism in the 1830s. Dispensationalism also takes its name from the idea that biblical history is best understood in light of a series of 'prophetic' periods and the identification of Israel and the Church as two distinct peoples of God. The theology of dispensationalism consists of a distinctive end time perspective, as all dispensationalists hold to premillennialism. During the first half of the 19th century the dominant view was postmillennialism which foresaw the

[144] Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p.415.
[145] Randall J. Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p.185.
[146] Gerhard Sauter, "Protestant Theology," in Walls (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, p.233.
[147] D. W. Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p.96-98.

growth of the church gradually bringing about a millennium prior to the return of Jesus.[148] However, the optimism of post millennialism was eroded by the negative effects of the American Civil war in the 19th century and World War One in the twentieth century. Both major events demolished any remaining hopes of a kingdom being established on earth by the universal church. Faupel further explains that Darby's eschatology ultimately gained ascendency throughout the nineteenth century. During this period the evangelical movement transitioned from supporting postmillennialism, with its optimistic view of the coming Kingdom age, to premillennialism, which had a more pessimistic spiritual outlook on the world.[149] Darby's eschatology included the teaching about the 'pre-tribulation rapture' and the belief that the second coming of Jesus will be in two separate stages.[150]

Evangelical teaching continued to have a profound influence on the Pentecostal movement in the early twentieth century.[151] This meant that Darby's premillennialist eschatology eventually found its way into the eschatological beliefs of the early Pentecostal denominations in North America and Europe.[152] While it is recognised that there has been a significant contribution by modern Pentecostal scholars towards the discipline of *eschatology,* studies of Pentecostal theologies of death remain scarce.

There is a presumption that North American theological scholarship continues to have a great influence on shaping the beliefs of Pentecostals in Britain. This is particularly because the

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[148] D. D. Bundy, "Edward Irving," in Burgess, & van Der Mass (eds.), The *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, p.803.
[149] Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, pp.96-99, 104-5, 110-12.
[150] The first stage will be a rapture of the Church at the beginning of a seven-year tribulation period when Christ would miraculously remove the Church in a 'secret rapture' before a seven-year tribulation. The second stage after the seven-year tribulation involve the glorious, triumphant return of Christ to the Earth with saints that we previously raptured. Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.314.
[151] Robert G. Clouse, "Fundamentalist Theology," in Walls (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, pp.267-274.
[152] Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, p.98.

international headquarters of some of the larger British-based Pentecostal denominations are situated in North America.[153] In this research there is a critical discussion about the 'rapture' and other aspects of dispensational premillennialism in chapter 4 in the context of how it correlates with one of the key theologies of death themes - 'material continuation'. However, it is important to note here that many newer Pentecostal/Charismatic church networks did not adopt dispensational premillennialism as some parts of charismatic movement moved towards a postmillennial eschatology.

2.3 Renewal of Pentecostal Eschatology

According to William Kay, the apostolic networks are a restorationist movement who turned to the bible and to the pattern of church history for an understanding of themselves and their role, particularly with the elevation of the 'five-fold' ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors.[154] Restorationists developed a preferred postmillennial eschatological scheme which allowed restorationist to diffuse the blessings of the millennium, where Christ reigns, into the present age of the church. They believed that the kingdom of God had an earthly and political dimension and not simply a spiritual blessing to be enjoyed by the believer.[155]

Towards the end of the twentieth century within some British and North American Pentecostal communities, future eschatology was displaced by *realised* eschatology and premillennialism by postmillennialism which included 'Kingdom Theology'. Kingdom Theology was proposed by North American theologian Gerhardus Vos in the early 20th century asserting that aspects

[153] This includes Church of God of Prophecy and New Testament Church of God.
[154] See Ephesians 4:13.
[155] Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain,* pp.29-30.

of the eschatology Kingdom of God are 'already' and 'not yet' realised in this age. The 'now' is the kingdom being 'at hand' whilst the future Kingdom of God reflects the apocalyptic dimensions of Jesus' teachings about the end of the world.[156] According to William Kay, Apostolic networks and restorationism in the UK were influenced by Kingdom Theology especially in the 1980s.[157] John Wimber and the Vineyard movement were influenced later by a different variant of Kingdom theology and especially the work of G.E. Ladd on Kingdom of God. This was associated more with signs of the Kingdom such as healing rather than postmillennial eschatology.[158]

Warrington makes the point that Pentecostals are now much more prepared to analyse and question traditional Pentecostal eschatology and in doing so some of them have arrived at different conclusions.[159] Even though the literal return of Jesus to the earth remains an important feature of Pentecostal eschatology, the fact that Jesus has not come back in the twentieth century, has resulted in a cooling of the expectation of the *imminence* of his return.[160] Warrington adds that Pentecostal churches appear to be no longer living with a sense of urgency that the end of history may be imminent.[161] Hollenweger explains that as social conditions for Pentecostals improve, the fervent expectation of the imminent second coming wanes.[162] Keener has also suggested that Pentecostals no longer embrace dispensational premillennialism eschatology with such vigour due to inconsistencies and failed attempts to provide a clear schedule of end-times events.[163] It was outside the scope of this research to establish what

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[156] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993) pp.66-67.
[157] Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain,* chapter 3.
[158] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament,* p.67.
[159] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.313.
[160] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.313.
[161] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.321.
[162] Hollenweger, *Pentecostals,* p.417.
Craig S. Keener, "Rightly Understanding God's Word. Revelation," *Pneuma Review* Vol. 6.4 (2006), pp.40-61

participants believed about end-time events and in the imminent return of Jesus, however, the focus of this research was to establish what participants generally believed about the 'resurrection of the dead' and how this is located with the eschatological timetable.

In his publication, *Spirit of the Last Days,* Althouse provides an in depth look at how eschatology developed within classical Pentecostal churches in the last century and critiques 'fundamentalist' tendencies within early Pentecostalism. 'Fundamentalism' refers to the beliefs of the Fundamentalist movement within early 20th century evangelicalism, which was a response to modernism and liberalism. This movement tended to have a dogmatic approach towards aspects of eschatology and Christian piety. Althouse highlights that since Pentecostals had not developed their own in depth eschatology, they were more than willing to ally with fundamentalist theology.[164] Early Pentecostals were certainly influenced by holiness evangelical doctrines at the time and embraced a premillennial dispensational position along with 'holiness' teachings.[165] Althouse advocates the centrality of eschatology and the continuity and the discontinuity of the kingdom of God,[166] which is similar to Gerhardus Vos' 'Kingdom Theology' discussed above.[167] However, this shift away from future eschatology draws more focus on the Spirit's work in making humans physically and spiritually whole during their lifetime rather than focusing on the renewal of life at the end of their lifetime. Similarly, Duffield and Van Cleave argue that rather than just inheriting their doctrine Pentecostals had reshaped eschatology into something more distinct and fundamental to everyday living making 'every moment eschatological' since to them at any time Christ may

[164]Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, pp.42-53.
[165] Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, pp.17, 23-23 &36.
[166] Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, p.61-107.
[167] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament,* pp.66-67.

return.[168] Although the main focus of this research is not the renewal of Pentecostal eschatology it does seek to shift the focus away from future eschatology. While these contributions are valuable in the ongoing renewal of Pentecostal eschatology, they are different from my own study in that while it embraces aspects of eschatology, my focus primarily is on theologies of death.

In his key publication, *Testimony in the Spirit,* the Anglican charismatic theologian Mark Cartledge explores the ordinary beliefs and practices of Pentecostal Christians in relation to the Holy Spirit. He does this by means of a congregational study of a single classical Pentecostal church in the UK through which he explores the contribution that ordinary theology makes in the construction of Pentecostal identity.[169] Like this research, his study is located within the discipline of practical theology and brings ordinary Pentecostal theology into critical dialogue with the contributions of Pentecostal/Charismatic theologians and social scientists.[170] However, my research differs from Cartledge's in a number of respects. While Cartledge explores six thematic areas which include worship, conversion, world mission and the second coming of Christ, my research focuses on theologies of death and eschatology. In one of his chapters, Cartledge examines the 'official' eschatology of the AOG and exposes some of the inherent tensions that are present in contemporary Pentecostalism.[171] In contrast, this research is not a study of a single congregation or denomination, but an exploration of the ordinary beliefs and practices across a number of selected Pentecostal churches. Also, Cartledge's study focused on the beliefs relating to the second coming of Jesus Christ which was brought into

[168] Duffield, Guy P. and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. (Los Angeles: Foursquare Media, 2008), p.523.
[169] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit,* p.10.
[170] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit,* p.15.
[171] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit,* p.155-177.

dialogue with Pentecostal eschatology.[172] This research focuses on the wider aspects of eschatology which relate to theologies of death.

2.4 Theologies of death from the wider Christian academy

The section provides a summary of the key contributors towards theologies of death from non-Pentecostal formal voices categorised according to different historical periods in Christian history.

2.4.1 Patristic period, c. 100- c.700

The term 'patristic' represents both the period of the church fathers, and the distinctive ideas which were developed by them. This was the period of the development of the discipline of 'apologetics' – the reasoned defence and justification of the Christian faith against critics.[173] There are a significant number of theologians from the patristic period; however, this thesis will be limited to the key contributors towards theologies of death.

Origen (c.185-c.254), one of the most significant defenders of Christianity in the third century, provided an important foundation for the development of eastern Christian thought. Origen's theological reflection about the resurrection of the dead in his publication *Ee Principiis* is relevant to the discussion of theologies of death theme in chapter 4. Origen here sets out a view of the spiritual nature of the resurrection body which is partly shaped by the writings of Paul in the New Testament, and partly by platonic ideas of perfection.[174]

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[172] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit,* p.155-177.
[173] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction, 4th Edition* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2007), pp.7-8.
[174]Origen, *de principiis:* Book II x 3 in *Sources Chretiennes,* vol. 252, ed. H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti (Paris: Cer, 198), 380.82-382.119.

Augustine of Hippo (c.354-c.430) is considered one of the most influential minds of the Christian church.[175] The traditional Augustinian teaching about 'original sin' became more or less an unbroken tradition from the fifth century through to the Reformation and eventually a view adopted later by Pentecostals.[176] Augustine also wrote *The City of God* which is a theological reflection of the political dimension of eschatological ideas in the New Testament. This work is set in the context of the destruction of the city of Rome and the collapse of the Roman Empire and was written in a genre that can be described as 'apocalyptic'. He highlights the strong eschatological tension between the present reality, in which the church is exiled in the world, and the future hope, in which the church will be delivered from the world at the return of Christ. Augustine also emphasises the physical nature of the resurrection body rather than regarding it as a purely spiritual body. [177]

Tertullian (c.160-c.225) is regarded as the father of Latin theology on account of the major impact which he had on the Western church.[178] In his publication, *Apologeticus,* he offers both an explanation and defence of the Christian view of hell, judgement and heaven in the face of criticisms made against it by some pagan writers.[179] In *Adversus Marcionem* ("Against Marcion") Tertullian shares his basic understanding of the eschatological Christian hope and sets out his thoughts about the millennium of the last age. Some of Tertullian's treaties reveal a close association with Montanism, or the 'new prophecy' as he called it. Montanism was a movement focused around the prophecies of the movement's founders which were believed to contain the Holy Spirit's revelation for the present age.[180] This is similar to how some

[175] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p.11.
[176] Warrington, Pentecostal Theology, p.35.
[177] Augustine, *de civitate* Dei XXII.xxx.3 translated by Henry Bettenson yin *City of God* (London: Penguin, 1972)
[178] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p.10.
[179] Tertullian, *Apologeticus,* XLVII, 12-14; in *Tertullian: Apology,* Loeb Classical Library, T.T. Glover (ed.) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p.210.
[180] Tertullian, *adversus Marcionem*, III.xxiv.3-6; in Oxford Early Christian Texts: *Adversus Marcionem*, E. Evans (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp.246-8.

Pentecostals interpret prophecies of the Bible to fit contemporary events taking place in the world, a theme which is discussed in chapter 4.

Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130-c.202) is noted especially for his robust defence of Christian orthodoxy in the face of a challenge from Gnosticism particularly in his publication, *adversus Haereses* ('Against Heresies'). In the course of this discussion he sets out his vision of the final restoration of God's creation which will be set at the coming of Christ for 'a thousand years'. Thus, Irenaeus and Tertullian believed in a literal millennial reign of Christ on the Earth, similar to the one adopted by Evangelicals and Pentecostals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[181]

The patristic period also saw the development of the ecumenical creeds. According to Alister McGrath, the creeds have become recognised as a concise, formal, and universally accepted statement of the main tenets of the Christian faith. The creeds were an important step toward achieving a doctrinal consensus within the early church.[182] During the patristic period two creeds established authority and respect throughout the church: *The Apostles' Creed* and the *Nicene Creed.* The *Apostles' Creed* is probably the most familiar form of the creed known to western Christians and is traditionally ascribed to individual apostles.[183] The *Nicene Creed*, which was formulated at the Council of Nicaea (June 325), includes the belief in the resurrection of the dead as one of the core tenets of faith.[184] Most Christian traditions can trace

[181] See Chapter 3.
[182] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, pp.14-15.
[183] Rufinus, *The Apostles' Creed: Textus Receptus* (c.400).
[184] Council of Nicaea, *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* (c.381).

their belief in the resurrection of the dead to these early ecumenical creeds, including Pentecostals.

2.4.2 The Medieval period and early Roman Catholicism c.700 to 1750

The aspects of Catholicism that emerged during this period that are pertinent to this research are 'prayers to the dead' and 'the cult of the saints'. The cult of Mary and prayers to the saints are the foundation of the formal ritual of prayers to the dead within early Roman Catholicism. In the early fifth century, the term *theotokos* ('God-bearer') was regularly applied to Mary. The Chalcedonian definition of Christology (A.D.451) gave an impetus to Marian devotion so that within two centuries four annual feasts were observed in her honour.[185] From the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries Marian devotion blossomed and prayers began to be directed to Mary. Prayers to the dead or 'community with the dead' is one of the key theologies of death themes discussed in chapter 4.

A consequence of the devotion of Mary is the cult of the saints. It emerged from the early church that some distinctive deceased 'saints' were holy enough to merit devotion.[186] This cult of Mary and saints formed the basis of the practice of community with the dead in the Catholic Church and many other Christian denominations around the world including the UK and some of the Caribbean islands. Dale Bisnauth, a Caribbean historian, points out that some Caribbean islands have a strong Catholic tradition; however, this excludes Jamaica which is where many of the lay participants of this research originate from. In chapter 5 there is a discussion of

[185] Thomas Oden, *The Word of Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989), p.157.
[186] Lugwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, IL: Tan Boos, 1955), Bk. II, Sec. 2, Pt 3, Ch. 2. S6, pp.207-8).

practices by British Caribbean's relating to community with the dead in dialogue with the cult of Mary and the saints.[187]

Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-74) emerged as the greatest philosopher and theologian of the medieval Catholic Church. One of his key publications was *Summa contra Gentiles*, an apologetic work for missionaries that contains a defence of natural theology.[188] During the Catholic Reformation, the Council of Trent (1545-63) was set up and officially adopted the theology of Thomas Aquinas and his synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Scripture.[189] Aquinas' work about the spiritual nature of death had an important impact on the teachings of the Catholic Church and other Christian traditions.

2.4.3 Reformation period c.1500-c.1750

The Reformation marks the next great contribution to systematic theology which is loosely divided into two divisions – Lutheran and Reformed. The Lutheran Reformation is particularly associated with the German territories and the influence of its founder, Martin Luther (1483-1546). The heart of Lutheran soteriology is the doctrine of justification by faith, the juridical declaration of God by which sinners are pronounced not guilty when they exercise faith in Jesus Christ.[190] However, it is Martin Luther's thesis about 'sleep state' and 'eschatological time' which are relevant for this research, particularly in connection with the theology of death theme - 'intermediate state' - discussed in chapter 4.

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[187] Dale Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Kingston Publishers, 1989), pp.11-30.
[188] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1975), 4.79.11.
[189] Council of Trent, Session VI; in Denzinger, (ed.), *Enchirdion Symbolorum*, 39 (ed.) (Freibug in Breisgau: Herder, 2001), s1529:506.
[190] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, vol.* 28 *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7 and 15 and 1 Timothy*, Hilton Oswald (ed.) (St Louis: Concordia, 1973).

The term *Reformed theology* (or *Calvinism)* owed its origins to a series of attempts to reform the morals and worship of the church according to a more biblical pattern. In the sixteenth century, John Calvin wrote the definitive work of Reformed theology, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* While the doctrine of predestination has become the hall mark of Reformed theology, it was neither central, nor key, to Calvin's theological system.[191] The third volume of the *Institutes* concludes with a chapter about the 'last resurrection' which is designed to show the end that Christ's redemptive work has ever in view. Calvin's contribution towards bodily theology is brought into dialogue with Pentecostal beliefs in connection with the theology of death theme - 'material continuation' in chapter 4.

In the Reformation, death rituals were simplifications of medieval death rituals and by the nineteenth century became enshrined in written liturgy within the Reformed tradition. In the British context, the early versions of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England (1549-1662) provide a service which still retains the Eucharist as one of its rites in a fourfold tradition pattern: 'a procession to the church or grave; the burial proper; a brief office of the dead; and a funeral Eucharist.' The 1549 rite also includes a prayer for the departed, clearly expressed in traditional terms together with a firm belief in the 'resurrection of the dead in the last day'.[192] According to Geoffrey Rowell, these earlier editions of the Anglican Prayer Book later influenced a number of 'Free Church' rites which would include Pentecostal churches at the turn of the twentieth century. However, the funeral rites of the Free churches such as the Methodists and Presbyterians departed from the Church of England in a number of ways including: expressly prohibiting prayers and exhortations to the dead and insisting that

[191] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Translated by Henry Beveridge* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 2008), 3.25.4.
[192] Church of England, *The Common Book of Prayer* (London: Church Publishing House, 1549 -1662).

reference to the hope of the resurrection should only be expressed for those who have died as faithful Christians.[193] This research explores how liturgy is used during Pentecostal funerals.

2.4.4 The Modern period c.1750-present

Modern theology emerged in the eighteenth century out of the ashes of the Enlightenment which saw the intellectual credentials of Christianity itself facing a major threat on a number of fronts.

Although the First and Second Vatican Council enshrined key doctrines of the Catholic Churches which influenced other Christian traditions, throughout the modern period there are no particular doctrines relating to theologies of death which have any direct relevance in this thesis. However, the writings of Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, do have some relevance. The most significant of Rahner's writings is an unstructured collection of essays known in English as 'Theological Investigations' published over the period 1954-84. The most important aspect of Rahner's theological writings so far as this thesis is concerned is his reflections on the transfiguration of the body in the resurrection of the dead which is discussed further in chapter 4.

In terms of Protestant practice during this period, the Methodist tradition of the singing of hymns at funerals as a revival of the early Christian custom was developed as a central feature. [194] Also, in 1864 the Wesleyans had agreed that burial should be conducted according to liturgical forms. Burials appealed to the poor, diverse ethnicities, and the illiterate particularly

[193] Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial*, pp.91-92.
[194] Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial*, p.94.

as it emphasised spiritual equality.[195] Early Methodist rituals are significant for the purposes of this research as classical Pentecostalism is rooted in the Methodist 'holiness' movement of the mid-nineteenth century in the United States.[196]

The Enlightenment began in Europe and spread out to other continents such as the Americas, Australasia and Africa. In contrast, after the age of Enlightenment the views of modern theologians appear to take the anthropological question more seriously about the essence of human nature. The key Protestant theologians of the modern western tradition for the purposes of this thesis include Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann and Jürgen Moltmann

The Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, is universally regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian of the twentieth century. Barth produced massive amounts of theological scholarship, the most significant of which was *Church Dogmatics.*[197] Barth argues in his early writings that the doctrine of last things is not the end of all things but a continuation of world history. Furthermore, he radically opposed any derivation of eschatology from holding a central place within the core tenets of Christianity.[198]

As a contemporary of Barth, the German Protestant theologian Paul Tillich produced a three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1951-63). This is written from the perspective of existential philosophy rather than traditional theology. In contrast to Barth, Tillich reformulates eschatology in the last part of his *Systematic Theology* where he describes the eschaton as the

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[195] The Book of Public Prayers and Services for the use of the people called Methodist (1882) citied in Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial*, p.95.
[196] C.P Gould and J. H Shakespeare, A Manual for Free-Church Ministers (1905) cited in Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial*, p.95.
[197] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 14 vols. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (eds. & trans.), (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936-1957).
[198] Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (1924), trans. H.J. Stenning (London: Holder & Stoughton, 1933), p.110.

point of intersection between eternity and time. Tillich also argues that the human person is and was naturally mortal and that sin does not produce death but gives death power. He does not believe that the fall of Adam physically changed the physiological or psychological nature of the human person. Therefore, a theological distinction is made by Tillich between physical death as natural and spiritual death as unnatural and caused by sin.[199]

Rudolf Bultmann was one of the new generation of German Protestant theologians of global significance. Bultmann argued that the human understanding of the world has changed radically since the first century, with the result that modern humanity finds the mythological world view of the New Testament unintelligible. Bultmann's program of 'demythologisation' is especially significant in relation to beliefs relating to eschatology. Bultmann is not at all interested in dogmatics nor the idea of 'last things' and designated the term 'eschatological' as everything that can be said about faith. Bultmann dismisses all notions of 'last things' found in the New Testament and interprets all concepts of 'last things' as only symbols that can signify conceptions of hope.[200]

The German Protestant theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, produced three publications which brought him international attention – *The Theology of Hope* (1964), *The Crucified God* (1972), and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (1975). Out of these publications *Theology of Hope* has made the most contribution towards eschatology and theologies of death and is therefore given more prominence within this thesis.[201] Barth's writings influenced Moltmann, who

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[199] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, vol. 3: Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).
[200] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology, the Gifford Lectures, 1955* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), p.43.
[201] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Grounds of and Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, translated by James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1968), pp.32-6.

argues that the scope of eschatology is not simply the doctrine of last things, but includes the period from the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit to the return of Jesus Christ, resurrection of the dead and the final judgement.[202] Moltmann has also made a contribution towards Pentecostal eschatology through Althouse's engagement with his work in the *Spirit of the Last Days.*[203]

The ordinary theologies of death of the participants are brought into conversation with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal formal voices which include these modern theologians where pertinent to in this research.

2.5 Ecclesiology and Death rituals

This study also explores the ecclesiological issues within the context of death rituals in the Pentecostal communities. I also dialogue with the wider Christian academy with regard to ecclesiology and other aspects of practical theology in the context of death. There has been a number of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars who have contributed to the discussion of ecclesiology and death rituals.

In terms of ecclesiology, Warrington makes the point that classical Pentecostals do not own a distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology.[204] Kärkkäinen on the other hand points out that Pentecostals increasingly are prepared to explore ecclesiological issues and to dialogue with others outside of their tradition.[205] This includes Simon Chan who developed an ecclesiology within the Pentecostal and evangelical traditions. He argues that Pentecostals share with their

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[202] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (San Francisco: SCM Press, 1996), p.70.
[203] Peter, *Spirit of the Last Days*.
[204] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.131.
[205] V-M Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002).

Protestant counterparts a weak, sociological concept of the church rather than a spiritual body which is 'more than the sum of its members'. Chan sees the church as a divine community, created by the Spirit of God 'before the creation of the world' (cf. Eph. 1:4) and speaks of the church as our 'mother' with a focus on the church as an eschatological community.[206]

The American religious studies scholar, Catherine Bell, defines rituals as: 'rules of conduct governing how people should act in the presence of sacred objects'.[207] However, while some scholars restrict the term 'ritual' to religious activities, this research will encompass wider human actions both religious and non-religious. A key dialogue partner is Douglas Davis, one of the leading British scholars of the theology and sociology of death. His publication, *The Theology of Death* provides a comprehensive examination of the theological as well as the practical issues surrounding death in contemporary Britain.[208] Ewan Kelly, another leading contemporary theologian, highlights how responses to death have changed as people seek rituals which are less church or theologically orientated and more about people expressing their own spirituality through culturally collective actions. [209] Colin Parkes and others examine how 'culture' within the context of death can determine which culturally approved actions and local customs offer possibilities for what actions are expected, for what seems fitting to do and not to do at the time of death.[210] Thomas Long, an American theologian, explores the theology and history of Christian funerals and the tensions associated with the Christian understanding of funerals in Western culture.[211] Similarly, this research explores the tensions associated with the Pentecostal understanding of funerals in Britain.

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[206] Simon Chan, "Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* Vol 22. 2 (2000) pp.184-208
[207] Bell, *Ritual*, p.24.
[208] Davis, *The Theology of Death*.
[209] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.25.
[210] Colin M. Parkes, Laungani, Pittu, Young, Bill (ed.), *Death and Bereavement across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[211] Thomas Long, *Accompany Them with Singing* (Louisville: Westminster Knox Press, 2009), p.xiii.

The Protestant theologian, Daniel Albrecht, also contributes to this discussion with his publication *Rites in the Spirit* as he presents an innovative study of Pentecostal rituals and practices. He makes a range of Pentecostal worship rites more accessible and understandable as he articulates them in simple coded components.[212] However, although his findings are as a result of field research at church events he attended, none of these included funeral events.

Martin Lindhardt notes that while there is an abundance of scholarly literature available on Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, there is a considerable vacuum in the detailed study of Pentecostal *ritual.* One of the reasons given by Lindhardt for the partial neglect of ritual in much of the existing literature may be that many Pentecostals themselves insist that there is an absence of ritual within their church life. This is due to the emphasis on spontaneous, informal, and experiential forms of worship characteristics of Pentecostal communities.[213] Lindhardt argues that it is in our interest to focus primarily on ritual when studying Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity because it provides a window to other topics such as community building and pneumatology.[214] This study differs from Lindhardt's work as while his book examines Pentecostal-charismatic ritual practice in different parts of the world this study narrows the focus to Pentecostals death rituals in Britain.

In the modern period, the development of 'local theologies' became an issue of increasing importance in Europe, particularly as the perceived 'Eurocentrism' of Christian theology was subjected to critical comment. As far as I am aware there is lack of theological reflection as to how far *death and funeral rituals* have changed or adapted in the diverse cultures that exist

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[212] Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic press, 1999), pp.122-123.
[213] Martin Lindhardt (ed.), *Practicing the Faith: The ritual Life of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), p.1.
[214] Martin Lindhardt, "Introduction," in Lindhardt (ed.), *Practicing the Faith,* p.2.

within the Pentecostal communities in Britain.[215] This research focuses on the multi-ethnic, cross-cultural and cross-generational dimensions of funeral practices amongst Pentecostals.

2.6 Black African and Caribbean theologies of death and eschatology

The literature on Black theology that is relevant to this study incorporates African American and British Black theologies based on the black experience in the USA and the UK. As some of my case studies are African and Caribbean majority churches, this research also draws upon both African and Caribbean theologies in its analysis of Pentecostal theologies of death.

In terms of African theologies, there are a number of key African scholars of religion who have contributed towards the discussion of African traditional religions (ATR), African spirituality and African Christianity which are relevant to this thesis. One of the most prominent African religious scholars is the late John Mbiti. Mbiti was an Anglican Priest who published over 400 articles, and books on theology, religion, philosophy and literature. In 1969 Mbiti published *African Religions and Philosophy* which explored the central place that spirits hold in the African worldview. [216] Other leading African scholars include Wande Abimbola, who has valuable insight into the divination system found in many parts of West Africa, especially among the Yoruba.[217] Ogbu Kalu was a prominent Nigerian scholar of African Christianity and global Pentecostalism. He authored or edited 16 books, including *African Pentecostalism* where he relates African Pentecostalism to indigenous African cosmologies. [218] Other African scholars have examined the continuities and discontinuities between traditional religious

[215] Hugh, A Fitting End, p.59.
[216] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (Oxford: Heninemann, 1990), p.75.
[217] Wande Abimbolo, "West African Cosmological System," in Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E van Book and Dennis L. Thomson (eds.), *Religion in Africa* (Portsmouth: James Curry Ltd, 1994), pp.101-102.
[218] Ogbu. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*. An Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008).

cosmologies and African Pentecostalism. These include Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu who argues that African churches tend to be more pervasive in their understanding of the spirit world than other religious or cultural contexts,[219] and Chigor Chike who explores the role of the Spirit in African cosmology among African churches in the British diaspora in his publication, *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*. [220] Another important Pentecostal scholar is the South African theologian Alan Anderson who has contributed to African scholarship by exploring continuities and discontinuities between ATR and Pentecostalism in a South African township.[221] Therefore, this thesis explores the extent African indigenous spirituality has a continuing influence on the beliefs and practices in relation to ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death amongst the African diaspora in Britain.

Celucien Joseph describes Caribbean theology as a 'postcolonial and decolonial' discourse in which scholars are concerned with a new theological paradigm grounded in the Caribbean landscape. Joseph articulates a vision of Caribbean theology of emancipation and decolonization as he attempts to engage the Caribbean experience within the framework of postcolonial life.[222] This postcolonial model is relevant to this research as it welcomes engagement and dialogue with Caribbean theology and cultural studies, as they pertain to the theological worldview. There are also a number of Caribbean scholars who provide insight into the origins and meanings of traditional folk religions, particularly those relating to death rituals which originate from Jamaica. Marjorie Cooper, the Jamaican folk religion author, identifies

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[219] J.K Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mission to Set the Captives Free: Healing, Deliverance and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *IRM* Vol 93.370/371 (July-Oct. 2004), pp.389-406 (396).
[220] Chigor Chike, The *Holy Spirit in African Christianity: An Empirical Study* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016)
[221] Allan Anderson, *Spirit-filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Birmingham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.96-102.
[222] Celucien L. Joseph, "Towards a Caribbean Political Theology of Emancipation and Decolonization: A comparative Analysis of Four Caribbean Theologians," *Black Theology* 2018 Vol 16. 2 (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group) pp.148 – 180 (148-149).

many superstitions that were shared by my research participants, which are explored in Chapter 6. These Caribbean superstitions related to death rituals provide means by which mourners attempt to make sense of or engage with the deceased 'spirit'. [223] The Jamaican novelist, Olive Senior, explores the two main forms of folk religion practiced in Jamaica - *obeah* and *myalism* - which appear to be connected with some of the death rituals and superstitions practiced amongst the British Caribbeans.[224] The scholar of Caribbean folk religion, Arthur Dayfoot, emphasises the need for Christians in the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora to retain elements of folk religion due to their spiritual worldview.[225] Caribbean scholars Ennis Edmonds, Michelle Gonzalez[226] and Shirley Gordon [227] also have written about Caribbean indigenous religions and their fusion with Christianity. Other Caribbean scholars relevant to this research are George Mulrain [228] and Horace Russell [229] who have written about Caribbean culture and religion.

This study recognises that the religious experiences of *British* Caribbeans are also distinct and have a unique cultural and historical context. Therefore, in this research formal voices are brought into dialogue to explore the continuities and discontinuities between Caribbean traditional religions and ordinary theologies of death of Caribbean immigrants and their descendants in Britain.

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[223] Marjorie Lewis-Cooper, "Some Jamaican Rites of Passage: Reflections for the Twenty-First Century," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* Issue 6 (May 2001), p.53.
[224] Olive Senior, *Encyclopaedia of Jamaican Heritage* Twin (Kingston: Guinep Ltd, 2003).
[225] Arthur C. Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church, 1492-1962* (Kingston: The Press University of West Indies, 1999), pp.184-185.
[226] Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p.126.
[227] Shirley C. Gordon, *God Almighty Make Me Free: Christianity in Pre-emancipation in Jamaica* (Kingston: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998), p.129.
[228] George Mulrain, "Caribbean," in *An Introduction to Third World Theologies,* John Parratt (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.164-165.
[229] Horace O. Russell, *The Missionary Outreach of the West Indian Church: Jamaica Baptist Missions to Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

Dayfoot points out that aspects of Caribbean folk religion are a retention of African traditional religion which came to the West Indies through transatlantic slavery.[230] The African-American historian, Estrelda Alexander, highlights that the slave trade and colonialism contributed to an African diaspora that has scattered Africans to Europe, the Americas and elsewhere. According to Alexander, most Caribbeans would trace their heritage to West African ethnic groups such as the Yoruba in Nigeria and Akan in Ghana.[231] On this basis, this research focuses particularly on the traditional religious practices of these two West African ethnic groups and bring them into dialogue with British African Caribbean Pentecostal death rituals.[232]

The leading African American black theologian, James Cone, argued that because the Kingdom is 'at hand', rather than waiting on a future heaven, the Kingdom of God ushered in a new age for black people in North America. In other words, for Cone, viewing liberation as a future event can have a powerful effect for black people in the present.[233] In particular, Cone's exploration about black 'songs of liberation' are relevant in this study with regard to British Caribbean grave-side songs discussed in chapter 7.[234]

Leading British Black theologians Anthony Reddie and Michael Jagessar discuss the eschatology of black churches in the context of their liberation.[235] In their research on black Christians in Britain, Reddie and Jagessar also make a distinction between the present and the future Kingdom of God where 'the future vision of the Kingdom has a transformative effect in

[230] Arthur C. Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church, 1492-1962* (Kingston: The Press University of West Indies, 1999), p.184.
[231] Estrelda Y. Alexander, *Black Fire; One Hundred years of African- American Pentecostalism* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011), pp.29-31.
[232] Henry H. Mitchell, Black Church Beginnings (Cambridge: Williams B Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), p.27.
[233] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1975), p.160.
[234] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Maryknoll: New York: Orbis Books, 1992).
[235] Michael N Jagessar and Anthony G Reddie, *Black Theology in Britain* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2007), p.62.

the present'.[236] The black womanist theologian, Karen Baker-Fletcher provides a wider scope to her realized eschatology within the framework of black liberation theology. She suggests that Black eschatology draws from holistic African worldviews where past, present and future are intertwined.[237] How these future visions of the Kingdom inform and shape the way death rituals are conducted at black funerals is explored in chapter 7.

Another leading British black theologian, Robert Beckford, observes that the context of the African Caribbean Church in Britain has produced a distinctive black-British expression of Pentecostalism. [238] Following Beckford, chapters 6 and 7 explore distinctive black British death rituals which have their roots in the Caribbean and Africa. There are also distinctions to be made between different generations within British Caribbean communities. The Black British scholar, Joe Aldred, has contributed to the discussion about the cultural divide between diverse generations of groups of Caribbean immigrants [239] and other aspects of black British rituals in his book *Respect.*[240]

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review has engaged with a number of dialogue partners from a range of Christian and other religious traditions. The primary dialogue partners are key Pentecostal scholars who have contributed to eschatology and theologies of death. However, whilst there has been a significant contribution by Pentecostal scholars towards discussions of Pentecostal

[236] Jagessar and Reddie, *Black Theology in Britain,* pp.95-96.
[237] Karen Baker-Fletcher, and Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher, *My Brother, My Sister: Womanist and Xodus God Talk,* (Eugene, Origen: WIPF Stock Publishers, 2002) p.284.
[238] Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: Political Theology for Black Churches in Britain* (London: SPCK, 2000), p.171.
[239] Joe Aldred, "Response to Roswith Gerloff's Pentecostals in the African Diaspora," in Anderson and Hollenweger (eds.) *Pentecostals after a Century*, p.87-88.
[240] Joe Aldred, *Respect: Understanding Caribbean British Christianity* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2005).

eschatology, Pentecostal theologies of death remain scarce. This research will focus primarily on theologies of death though it will draw upon aspects of eschatology where relevant to the discussion. There are also a number of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostals scholars who have contributed to the discussion of death rituals and funeral practices who are dialogue partners in this thesis.

As the majority of Pentecostal churches in this study are BMCs, important dialogue partners include scholars of Black theology (African American and British), African and Caribbean theologies. In general, there are a diverse range of formal voices which are brought into dialogue with the ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death in this research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

The task in this project was to choose a suitable methodology and research methods suitable for the empirical data needed to be collected and analysed in this research.[241] The methodology for this research is located primarily within a qualitative framework as it is concerned with investigating reasons for human behaviour and beliefs in the context of death and funeral rituals in selected Pentecostal churches.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first locates the 'four voices' approach within the broader discipline of practical theology. I explore the practical- theological tools for theological reflection in the context of incorporating the levels of operant, espoused, normative and formal theological discourse. The second section explores the research and empirical methods used in this research. The third section examines and evaluates the methodological approach for the research design with regard to how the particular denominations and churches were selected.

3.2 Theology in Four Voices approach

This research adopts a theological framework used by ARCS called 'Theology in Four Voices' (TFV). This framework was developed by Helen Cameron and Deborah Bhatti and other

[241] John and Mowat Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2009), p.30.

members of the team as a way of understanding the different places or sources from which theological discourses are disclosed.[242]

Catherine Duce utilises the TFV approach in her article 'A Theological Exploration of the Practices of Hospitality' in which she defines each theological voice more clearly.[243] The first 'espoused' voice which is 'what we say we do' and represents the articulation of one's beliefs. In this research the 'espoused' voices are drawn from beliefs articulated in the interviews and focus groups. The second 'operant' voice is 'what we actually do' which is embodied in one's practices. In this research, this involved observing what people do in their natural environment in relation to death. The third 'normative' voice is the established doctrine and confessional theology of churches and denominations often comprised within official statements of belief and policy documents. In this thesis, the normative theology of churches or denominations together will at times be referred to as the 'official' theological voices as described by Cartledge.[244] The fourth 'formal' voice is the engagement with academic theological discourse. In this research this has been drawn from Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal sources, including other disciplines such as social sciences.

The aim of this research is to identify, discern and analyse the usage of the four voices to elicit a better understanding about ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death. Thus, the operant and espoused voices are brought into conversation with the normative voices of Christian tradition and the formal voices of the academy. In this study the conversations are carried out *within* a Pentecostal denomination as much as between denominations. As a 'multi-voices' dialogue

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[242] Cameron et al, *Talking about God in Practice*, pp.52-56.
[243] Catherine Duce, "Church-based Work with the Homeless: A Theological Exploration of the Practices of Hospitality," *Practical Theology PRTH* Vol 6.1 (2013) pp.87-103 (90).
[244] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.19.

these four voices are not distinct from one another but are interdependent and demonstrate an interconnectedness and intrinsic unity as we can never hear one voice without echoes of the other three.[245] By engaging in multi-vocal dialogue, I enable different theological voices to be articulated and interpreted, and disclose important tensions between the voices. Ultimately my theological task is to elucidate their meaning and formulate a response.

Watkins argues that models of theological reflection which seek to integrate scripture, tradition and experience have a 'striking … prior assumption of separation of experience from tradition or doctrine' in which both are 'objectified' as conversation partners.[246] Cameron *et al* also notes that if Christian traditions place too much emphasis on 'doctrine' to the detriment of 'experience' or vice versa this can often result in restraining theological reflection.[247] Thus, the TFV approach is a suitable framework for this research because both doctrine and experience are objectified as conversation partners in balanced way.

Watkins central conviction of the TFV approach is that 'the practices of Christian living are not only suitable objects for theological exploration but are themselves theological and bearers of theology. Watkins also notes that this approach is fundamentally non-correlationist and it does not seek to correlate theology with practices. Practices are of themselves embodiments of faith seeking understanding and they form an authoritative theological voice.[248] Elsewhere, she refers to the integrated nature of theology-and-practice and the interpenetration of the four

[245] Clare Watkins, "Practising Ecclesiology: From Product to Process. Developing Ecclesiology as a Non-Correlative Process and Practice through the Theological Action Research Framework of Theology in Four Voices," *Ecclesial Practices* 2 (2015) pp.23-39 (37).
[246] Clare Watkins, "Texts and practices: an ecclesiology of tradition for pastoral theology," in *Keeping Faith in Practice: Aspects of Catholic Pastoral Theology,* James Sweeney, Gemma Simmonds and David Lonsdale (eds.) (London: SCM, 2010), pp.163-78 (168).
[247] Cameron *et al*, *Talking about God in Practice*, pp.26.
[248] Watkins (2015) "Practising Ecclesiology," pp.23-39 (34-38).

voices as the dynamic of divine revelation.[249] Therefore, in this research 'ordinary' theology (both espoused and operant voices) are considered embodiments of faith and they are treated as authoritative theological voices which are worth paying attention to.

3.3 Evaluation of the TFV approach

The TFV approach could be adapted within a Pentecostal framework by re-defining 'normative voices.' In its application by ARCS the 'normative' voice is the established doctrine and confessional theology of churches and denominations often written in official statements of belief and policy documents.[250] However, there may be a case for treating the verbal statements of authoritative figures, such as senior Pentecostal clergy, who still largely rely on oral tradition, as sources of normative rather than an espoused theology in certain circumstances.

Also, within the TFV approach there is a case for incorporating a 'fifth' voice, the researcher's own voice, through the process of reflexivity. As a Pentecostal researcher, I found that my own theological convictions were also brought into the conversation and subjected to interrogation through my participation in death rituals, by listening to the voices of participants, and by engaging with Pentecostal scholarship.[251] In the field research, I considered myself as an 'insider looking out' as I was familiar with the religious and social setting.[252] In interaction with the other voices, I was able to construct new understandings of certain death and funeral rites which allowed my perspective to be transformed by this dialogue. Therefore, this has

[249] Watkins, *Disclosing Church*.
[250] Cameron, and Bhatti, *Talking about God in Practice*, pp.52-56.
[251] Cameron, and Bhatti, *Talking about God in Practice*, pp.52-56.
[252] The insider/outsider debate is discussed in more detail in section 3.12.

allowed me to theologically reflect on the customs and traditions of my family, church community and local culture using my 'fifth' voice.

3.4 Practical Theology

The TFV approach is a method used in practical theology. Labanow defines practical theology as 'the theological reflection arising out of and giving guidance to a community of faith in the praxis of its mission as it engages in a mutually critical conversation.'[253]

This association with 'the community of faith' has led practical theology to be seen by some scholars such as Ballard and Pritchard as simply a methodology limited to pastoral theology or ministerial training. [254] However, Immink identifies practical theology's domain as extending beyond the church or faith institutions, out into broader society and into the daily lives of believers.[255] This makes practical theology suitable for this research.

Cartledge's definition of practical theology as 'an empirical discipline [which] uses the tools and methods of the social sciences to map out the beliefs and values, attitudes and practices of individuals and communities', closely aligns with the methods and aims of this study.[256] This study is also similar to Cartledge's in terms of its focus on the empirical method in a local church context and also aims to be sensitive towards the denominational tradition and Pentecostal spirituality while being critical in its analysis.[257] The field of practical theology seeks to understand and test the coherence of the church's espoused and *operant* voices and

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[253] C.E. Labanow, *Evangelicalism and the Emerging Church: A Congregational study of a Vineyard Church* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p.24.
[254] Ballard P. & Prichard, J. *Practical Theology in Action: Christian thinking in the service of the church and society* (London: SPCK, 1996), pp. 24-25.
[255] Immink, G (Translation, Reinder Bruinsma) *Faith: A Practical Theological Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Williams B. Eerdmans, 2005) p.180.
[256] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit,* p.15.
[257] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit,* p.18.

reflect on them theologically by engaging with the normative and formal voices. Making sense of practice draws into the conversation the formal and normative voices.

When studying religious experiences, social scientific methods are useful to theologians seeking to empirically capture and analyse both the *beliefs* and *practices* of Christians. However, according to Willows and Swinton, practical-theological methodology differs from social science depending on its context and focus. There are two areas of context and focus they highlight which is relevant to this research:

> For ministers it is a way of applying theology to their daily encounters, for academics, a way of looking at theology that acknowledges the significance of the process of theological reflection; and for the counsellor, practical theology works itself out as a dialogue critical partner within the ongoing conversation with contemporary psychological theories [258]

For the first, this research utilises empirical methods to explore and reflect theologically upon data in order to articulate ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death. For the second, this research invites participants to share stories that expresses their meaningful experiences of death.

The methodology of this research also corresponds with two out of five of Miller-McLemore's models of practical theology - the 'way of life' approach and the 'methods of pastoral practice' approach.[259] The 'way of life' approach, as applied in this research, aims at transposing biblical doctrines, symbols and rituals relating to death as a cultural contemporary mode of expression of the Christian faith. The 'methods of pastoral practice' approach, as applied in this research,

[258] Willows, D. & Swinton, J. "Introduction," in D. Willows and J. Swinton (eds.) *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care: Practical Theology in a Multidisciplinary Context,* (Tyne & Wear: Athenaeum Press, 2000), p.11-16 (11-12).
[259] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Introduction: Contributions of Practical Theology" in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Oxford: A John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2012), pp.7-12.

aims to help clergy to reflect practically on how they approach death rituals to meet the specific needs of their worshipers.

3.5 Empirical Theology

Johannes van der Ven, the Dutch theologian and pioneer of empirical theology, argues that 'practical theology is empirical theology' as distinct from systematic or biblical theology.[260] Cartledge builds upon this approach by describing empirical theology as a discipline which aims 'to explore, describe and test theological ideas contained within a specific context' using social scientific methods.[261] The epistemological outlook for this study also adopts a *praxis* approach to theology, seeing the practice, reflection and analysis trajectory as bound together in a theological cycle.[262]

Van der Ven addresses two main issues arising from the use of empirical methods in theology. Firstly, Paul Tillich, in his *Systematic Theology,* argues that God is the direct object of theology, therefore empirical theology cannot succeed because its direct object: (1) does not exist within scientific experience and (2) can only be verified by participation, not from a distance as scientific methods require.[263] Van der Ven disagrees with Tillich on this fundamental assumption and argues instead that God cannot be directly or empirically studied due to his transcendence and we are instead limited to studying the faith of people, of which God is the

[260] J. A van der Ven, "Practical Theology: from Applied to Empirical Theology," *Journal of Empirical Theology* Vol 1.1 (1988) pp.7-27 (17).
[261] Cartledge, M. J. "Empirical Theology: inter or intra- disciplinary?" *Journal of Beliefs & Values Studies in Religion & Education*, Vol 20.1 (1999), pp.98-104 (100).
[262] Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), p.76.
[263] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume One* (Herts: James Nisbet & Co, 1964), p.49-50.

direct object.[264] Following van der Ven, this research engages sympathetically with the beliefs and the practices which represent the viewpoint of ordinary Pentecostals.

The second issue van der Ven raises is the question about the two ways empirical methods should be used by a theologian: 'inter-disciplinary' and 'intra-disciplinary'. According to Francis, an inter-disciplinary approach wishes for research to engage readers from all disciplines involved and to engage debates equally between all disciplines. In support of an inter-disciplinary approach Francis argues that empirical theology must be available for scrutiny and tested by the social sciences in order to obtain respect from social sciences. [265] However, Cartledge considers that such an approach relies too heavily on the abilities of the researcher to develop skills and knowledge to satisfy methodological criterion and may stifle any possibility of creativity.[266] Instead, Cartledge supports the intra-disciplinary model which allows theology to utilise and innovate empirical methods for its own purposes. It is this intra-disciplinary model that this research employs as it allows for researchers to remain as 'theologians', while conducting original empirical research, without relying on the rigid methodologies of the social sciences.

3.6 Ethnographic methods

According to Stringer, ethnography has its roots in the process of observing and studying a group or people, in order to gain an understanding of their way of life, worldview and beliefs.[267] The process of observing and studying the life world of the group is referred to as conducting fieldwork or being 'in the field'. In their book *Ethnography: principles in practice,* Atkinson

[264] van der Ven, J. A "Practical Theology," p.17.
[265] Francis, L. "Personality Theory and Empirical Theology," *Journal of Empirical Theology* Vol 15.1 (2002) pp.37-53 (40).
[266] Cartledge, "Empirical Theology", p.100.
[267] M Stringer, *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion* (London: Continuum, 2008), p.18.

and Hammersley identify five most common features of most ethnographic research which can be applied to this study:

1. Studying people in everyday contexts rather than in synthetic conditions;
2. Data is gathered from a wide range of sources including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and collection of literature;
3. Relatively unstructured, inductive data collection and analysis;
4. Generally, focus in detail on a few small-scale cases;
5. Data analysis is typically qualitative, with any statistical analysis paying a secondary role.[268]

One way that ethnographic methods have been utilised is within a 'case study' approach as described by Yin.[269] This research is similar to an embedded case or congregational study in that the multiple groups studied were 'bounded' by time and places. However, this research differs from a case study in that it did not seek to focus on one church or process and lacks the depth of level of immersion required.[270] Therefore, this research would not be regarded as an ethnographic or an embedded case study. However, this research draws upon certain features of an ethnographic study in terms of the level of enquiry and the desire to understand the meanings of the groups under study.

3.7 Research Design

In this research I sought to select a representative sample which showed similar frequencies of data as the population as a whole. According to Stephen Hunt, there were approximately 17,000

[268] P. Atkinson & M Hammersley, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007), p.3.
[269] R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, fourth edition (London: SAGE Publications, 2009, p.15.
[270] Mary C. Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), pp.10-4.

Pentecostal churches throughout the UK in 2017.[271] In a more recent publication Andrew Davies adds that traditional Pentecostal denominations account for around 250,000 people and another 30-40,000 or so in independent Pentecostal churches.[272] In order for me to select a representative sample I used the method of *staging* my sampling.[273] The first stage was limiting the sample to a geographic location in the UK. As I live in the West Midlands and also the area had the highest number of Pentecostal churches outside of Greater London,[274] this area was considered the most suitable choice. The second stage was taking a probability sample of Pentecostal churches within the West Midlands. This involved identifying the primary Pentecostal denominations in this area which were representative of the range of Pentecostal traditions in Britain investigated in my introductory chapter: These were:

a. Elim Pentecostal Church (EPC)
b. Assemblies of God (AOG)
c. New Testament Church of God (NTCOG)
d. Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP)
e. Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)
f. Independent Pentecostal churches

The reason why a. & b. were selected is because AOG and EPC are the largest white majority Pentecostal denominations in the UK. NTCOG & COGOP are the largest Caribbean black-majority denominations in the UK. RCCG is not only the largest African black majority

[271] Stephen Hunt, "A History of Pentecostalism in Britain," London School of Economics and Political Science, accessed on 15 May 2017, http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2016/11/a-history-of-pentecostalism-in-britain/.
[272] Andrew Davies, "Heritage and Hope: A Story of British Pentecostalism" in Aldred (ed.), *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology*, p.4.
[273] Roger Gomm, *Social Research Methodology: A Critical introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.80.
[274] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain,* pp.12-15.

Pentecostal denomination but the largest Pentecostal denomination in the UK.[275] The Asian Pentecostal churches in the UK, some of which are based in the West Midlands, were omitted from this research because their number was considered too small to assimilate in the field research. The last stage was to draw up a shortlist of local churches from the above denominations I would invite to take part in this research which are listed as follows along with their corresponding short descriptions used in this thesis:

1. Church of God of Prophecy in Birmingham ('COGOP (B'ham 1)')
2. Church of God of Prophecy in Birmingham ('COGOP (B'ham 2)')
3. New Testament Church of God in Birmingham ('NTCOG (B'ham 1)')
4. New Testament Church of God in Birmingham ('NTCOG B'ham 2)')
5. Independent Church in West Bromwich ('West Bromwich Church')
6. New Testament Church of God in the Black Country ('NTCOG (Black Country)')
7. Elim Pentecostal Church in Staffordshire ('Elim (Staffs)')
8. Elim Pentecostal Church in Birmingham ('Elim (B'ham)')
9. Redeemed Christian Church of God in Birmingham ('RCCG (1)')
10. Redeemed Christian Church of God in Birmingham ('RCCG (2)')

[275] Harriet Sherwood, "Pentecostal church looks to white Britons to boost congregations," *Guardian*, 30 December 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/30/pentecostal-church-looks-to-white-britons-to-boost-congregations.

11. Assemblies of God Church in Birmingham ('AOG (B'ham))

12. Independent Church in Edgbaston ('Edgbaston Church')

13. Independent Church in Handsworth ('Handsworth Church')

14. Independent Church in Great Barr ('Great Barr Church')[276]

The churches in this shortlist have also been chosen by making a judgement as to the number and types of churches that would be representative of Pentecostal churches in the West Midlands which could be reasonably accessed within the timescale required for the research. Also, by selecting the churches from a spread of denominations, traditions, and ethnicities, I believe that this made the sample more representative of the range of Pentecostal churches in Britain.

It was necessary to evaluate whether I needed to make generalisations from the data collected from the church sample about Pentecostalism in the UK as a whole.[277] In terms of generalising the data solicited from this sample of churches using the criteria developed by Gomm, there are two important questions that need to be addressed: (1) Whether the area to which the survey results are to be extrapolated is similar or different from that in which the survey was conducted; and (2) Whether the practices are of the kinds which are likely to show similar patterns in different areas.[278]

[276] To maintain confidentiality, all the churches in this thesis are named in such a way that does reveal the specific identify of the local church.
[277] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.96.
[278] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.96.

Applying the first question, even though the sample represents a diverse range of Pentecostal churches, the data collected could not adequately be used to make generalisations about Pentecostal churches throughout the UK. This is because there are diverse sub-cultures within Pentecostal communities which differ as a result of geographic location, demographics, church doctrine and other factors. However, most of these churches will be part of national denominations which are spread throughout the UK. Therefore, applying the second question the beliefs and practices in relation to death a particular local church are more likely to show similar patterns to churches in a different part of the UK if they belong to the *same* denomination and have similar demographics. However, it is not possible to always make this assumption as still there will be variations and sub-cultures within denominations which may be also affected by locality, size, ethnic makeup and other factors. This was demonstrated in two of the churches in my sample that were from the same denomination (EPC) - which may have had a similar historical background and doctrine but had a different church culture in terms of ethnic makeup and urban/suburban location.

3.8 Literature Review

Literature relating to theologies of death was reviewed from a range of different Christian traditions. This included a systematic review of theologies of death from both the Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal academy as set out in chapter 2.

The literature review informed my research design by providing me with the depth and scope of information about Pentecostal historiography and the contemporary landscape in the UK and beyond, in particular with regards to the diversity of Pentecostal churches. The review also helped to shape my research questions by helping me to identify the gaps in Pentecostal

theology and by sharpening my focus on the relevant themes related to theologies of death which might be explored.

The review of written literature included a range of sources of 'normative' theology which is the established doctrine and confessional theology of churches and denominations codified in official statements, church publications, and policy documents. Most of the Pentecostal denominations in this research have published their statements of belief on their websites. All their statements of belief have an eschatological feature. A few examples are as follows:

> We believe….in His personal return in power and glory at His second coming (COGOP).[279]
>
> We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the final judgement of the world, the eternal conscious bliss of the righteous and the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked (EPC).[280]
>
> We experience daily the resurrection of the Spirit, all the born-again souls who are passed from death to life – Eph. 6:14; Rom 6:11; John 5:20. As this body is dissolved, immediately we are entering into our Heavenly Home or house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens – I Cor. 5:1-8. There is resurrection of the Body… (RCCG).[281]

These quotations demonstrate that nearly all of the churches include statements of belief about the second coming of Christ *and* the resurrection. Also, churches such as NTCOG, EPC & AOG provide short statements which summarize the core tenets of their belief. In contrast,

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[279] Church of God of Prophecy, "About us," http://www.cogop.org.uk/About.aspx, accessed 5 July 2013.
[280] Elim Pentecostal Church, "What we Believe," https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417857/Our_Beliefs.aspx, accessed 23 April 2019.
[281] Redeemed Christian Church of God, "Statement of beliefs," *http://rccg.org/who-we-are/our-beliefs/*, Accessed on 7 May 2019.

churches such as COGOP and RCCG have expounded statements of belief with biblical references in support of each statement. A textual analysis of some of these statements is undertaken in chapters 4 and 5 as they are brought into dialogue with espoused voices. Although some of these statements have more doctrinal content they still lack critical discussion about the meaning and context of their beliefs so additional sources of normative theology are brought into dialogue.

Some of the larger denominations such as COGOP, NTCOG, EPC, and AOG have all published official manuals for their ministers which includes funeral liturgy. For example, NTCOP has the *Ministers Service Manual* which contains a section for funerals, including guidelines for what ministers need to do before, during and after a funeral. It also has an outline funeral liturgy for different types of services together with suggested bible readings and prayers.[282] COGOP have a similar section in their *Ministers Pocket Manual.*[283] A textual analysis of some of these manuals is carried out in chapter 7 with regard to their funeral liturgy as they are brought into dialogue with espoused and operant theological voices.

Additional sources of normative theology are drawn from the larger denominations such as COGOP, NTCOG, EPC, AOG, and RCCG who have official publications of books which comprises of some critical reflection about their doctrines and beliefs. For example, for COGOP, it was while F. J. Lee was the second General Overseer of the Church of God from 1923 that he authored a number of different books and church articles on dispensational eschatology which had an enormous impact on the early life of the denomination.[284] Later in

[282] Clyne W. Buxton, *Minister Service Manual* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1994), pp.113-127.
[283] Brian Sutton, *Minister's Pocket Manual:* Church of God of Prophecy Edition (Cleveland: White Wing Publishers, 2016).
[284] Coulter, Dale M., "Pentecostal Visions of The End: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and The Fascination of The Left Behind Series," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (Oct. 2005) Vol. 14.1, pp.86-87.

the century COGOP published their official handbook *History & Polity* which remains an invaluable source of reference of COGOP governance, doctrine and practice and in particular the churches "Twenty-Nine Prominent Teachings". Out of the "Twenty-Nine Prominent Teachings" four relate to eschatology from a pre-millennial dispensational perspective.[285] This position is maintained in a more recent paper, entitled *International, Biblical Principals Beliefs and practices,* published on the American version of the COGOP's website.[286] In the *Official Manual* of COGOP there is a chapter on, "The Doctrine of Last Things" which deals with the final conditions of the world or the end of time.[287]

RCCG has published a series of Sunday School manuals which include teaching about eschatology and the resurrection of the dead.[288] In another RCCG publication, *The Last Days* written by the international overseer of RCCG, Enoch Adeboye, there is more theological reflection on the doctrine of the Rapture.[289] As Adeboye is the General Overseer of the RCCG church worldwide, therefore, it would be reasonable to conclude that his written teachings represent the normative theology of the denomination.

In the early twentieth century, the EPC published *The Constitution* incorporating their first twelve Statements of Fundamental Truths. A more in-depth discussion about theologies of death and eschatology are contained in EPC's historical journal, *The Elim Evangel* from 1925.[290] The 1922 EPC statements of Fundamental Truths remained relatively unchanged until

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[285] James Stone, *History & Polity* (Tennessee: White Wing Publishing House, 1977), p.246-249.
[286] COGOP International, *Biblical Principals Beliefs and practices* http://cogop.org/about/doctrine/pre-millennial-second-coming-of-jesus.html (accessed 27 March 2013), Although this is American based website due to the close governmental structures between COGOP churches across Atlantic this provides a reliable source of data of into the principals, beliefs and practices that also applies in the UK.
[287] Brian Sutton, *Minister's Pocket Manual.*
[288] RCCG, *Sunday School Student's Manual,* p.61.
[289] E. A. Adeboye, *The Last Days: A Study of the Book of Revelation* (Lagos: F & J Publishing Limited, 2002), p.233.
[290] George Jeffreys, "The King is Coming! Do you Believe it," *The Elim Evangel,* Vol 6.1, 1 January 1925, p.1.

a committee was set up in 1992 by the Executive Council of EPC to consider changes to the statement of Fundamental Truths.[291] In a more recent 1976 publication, the former Evangelist Secretary of the EPC, Wynne Lewis, wrote a chapter in *Pentecostal Doctrine* about the Rapture.[292]

In the case of AOG, the history and doctrine of the church has been catalogued by the historian, Edith Blumhofer, through a number of publications including in her two-volume study entitled *The Assemblies of God* and volume one contains a discussion about eschatology.[293] According to Blumhofer, AOG developed the churches' Bethel Bible Training School and Midwest Bible School in 1920. During this period these Bible Schools embraced a premillennial dispensational position and sought to bring AOG view in full harmony with this teaching.[294] AOG have also published a number of papers which have been presented at their annual conferences which include the debates about how far the denomination should maintain a dispensational premillennial position in their statements of belief.[295]

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[291] *Report of Committee to consider a revision of the Statement of Fundamental Truths of Elim Foursquare Church* (Elim Conference, 1992).
[292] I. Lewis, "The Rapture of the Church," in Brewster (ed.), Pentecostal *Doctrine*, p.263.
[293] Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism, Volume 1* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1989).
[294] Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: Volume 1*, pp.18-19.
[295] Examples are David Garrard, "The Importance of Keeping the Premillennial Rider in any Statement of Faith regarding the Second Coming of Christ" A discussion Paper submitted to the General Council of the Assemblies of God, The Donald Gee Centre, Mattersey Hall, nr. Doncaster (2002), Bob Hyde, "Do Pentecostals need to be Premillennial?" A discussion Paper submitted to the General Council of the Assemblies of God, The Donald Gee Centre, Mattered Hall, nr. Doncaster (2003).

3.9 Interviews

A number of face-to-face interviews were conducted with clergy drawn from each church in the research sample. A letter of invitation and a consent form was given to every potential participating clergy which set out a brief description of the project and what the participation involved.[296] The number of clergy interviews carried out by the end of this research was 12. There were also two additional interviews with a funeral director and notable British black theologian. Face-to-face interviews allowed for a level of personal engagement and interaction. The clergy can also be regarded as 'key informants' who were able to provide important information about the community in mourning following the death of a loved one, and it was expected that these interviews would help me to understand the church and cultural environment better. The interviews were semi-structured and included open and closed questions aimed at seeking answers to the research questions.[297]

In terms of the normative voices, it was noted that when speaking about this topic, the responses given by some of the ministers would often be preceded by the words 'we believe' or 'the church believes'. This raised the question as to whether certain responses from the ministers could represent the *normative* voices of their respective churches or denominations. Cameron *et al* highlight issues of authenticity, legitimation and identity for the practices carried out to be regarded as 'normative'.[298] Therefore, if this principle is applied to this research, to be authentic and legitimate the 'normative' voices must be the official, *written* doctrine and established theology of churches and denominations. The word 'official' here meaning that the written doctrine has been published or endorsed by the church or denomination. Therefore, any

[296] See Appendices I & II.
[297] See Appendix IV.
[298] Cameron et al, *Talking about God in Practice,* p.55.

articulations shared by ministers in this research are treated as sources of espoused rather than normative theology. In any event, this research recognises that the espoused voices of both the clergy and the laity are valuable sources of ordinary theology.

Astley suggests that a significant part of getting understanding comes from listening to people's ordinary theology and also asking people directly about their beliefs.[299] When clergy in this study were asked directly about their ordinary theology this enabled their beliefs, practices and stories to be captured. These articulations represent the oral narrative which is an important source of theological enquiry in many Pentecostal traditions. In this local context high value is placed on stories and experiences which may not be captured by literary research.[300] Oral-narratives reflect distinctive practices in this community of faith and allows for the Pentecostal 'story' to be integrated with the life experiences of the participant which gives a 'voice' to every believer.[301]

3.10 Focus Groups

A number of focus group sessions were carried out with Pentecostal laity in order to record their beliefs and stories relating to their experiences as distinct from their clergy. Focus groups were a way of bringing people together with a common spirituality to talk together in depth about this research topic in a non-threatening environment. In this case each focus group was formed from a single church and they consisted entirely of laity. The participants were encouraged to share spontaneously their beliefs, views and experiences relating to death. This enabled me to listen to conversations between participants and observe their interactions as a

[299] Astley, "The Analysis, Investigation and Application of Ordinary Theology" in Astley & Francis (eds.), *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church,* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) pp.1-9 (1).
[300] Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the oppressed* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p.87.
[301] Johns, *Pentecostal Formation,* p.87.

group.[302] The reason why focus groups were considered as a better approach than one to one interviews for laity was mainly for practical reasons as there are a larger number of laity in church communities from which to gather data. Also, focus groups differ from interviews as they can generate group discussion, and so reveal the meaning that people read into the discussion topic either on an individual or a collective basis.[303]

In a similar way to the clergy interviews, the focus groups were semi-structured and included open and closed questions aimed at seeking answers to the research questions.[304] During the focus groups, my intention was to ask questions which would probe the *habitus* of the group to help to identify their practices and beliefs when it came to death and funerals.[305] Unlike an in-depth interview the facilitator of a focus group has less control beyond asking open, probing questions although focus groups can access information not easily shared in one-to-one interviews through people sharpening and refining their views in response to others.[306] The range of group sizes was between 6 and 15 and the total number of focus groups was 6.

Interviews and focus groups tend to be associated more with *qualitative* approaches to research. Therefore, these methods provided more in-depth data from the representative sample and helped to develop close, friendly, trusting relationships with the participants.

The aim of the research design was to go in 'depth' rather than to go too wide. The meaning of 'depth' in this context is to get a more detailed knowledge of and identify the complexities of a particular theme. If I approached this study by maximising the *quantity* of data this may not

[302] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, p.24.
[303] Uwe Flick, *an Introduction to Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), p.204.
[304] See Appendix V.
[305] Mary C. Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*), p.64.
[306] Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission* (London: SCM Press, 2013), p.110.

have given me enough time to examine in depth about their beliefs and practices of death rituals. Instead my aim was to focus on the *quality* of the data by seeking to obtain a deeper understanding of the meanings of death and funeral practices and beliefs from the perspective of participants and to explore the deeper realities of this context than might appear on the surface. [307] Uwe Flick calls this approach *focused* interviews. This provides a basis for interpreting significant findings which distinguishes between *objective* facts of the situation and the respondents' *subjective* articulations of the situation to bring them into conversation.[308]

The alternative research method absent from this research was a social survey approach using standardised research questionnaires. I concluded that questionnaires with a forced-choice question and answers are more suited for primarily quantitative methodological approaches. Also, such a method was deemed to be inadequate to capture the complexity, subtlety, nuance and depth around the subject of death. Such a survey may tell us about the prevalence of certain death rituals but it would not give us sufficient information about experiences and possible meanings behind their practices and behaviour.

In terms of accessibility and cooperation of clergy for an interview, my acquaintance with some of the potential participants made it easier to enlist their cooperation. However, I also managed to enlist a few pastors with whom I did not have any acquaintance. In general, the pastors were effectively the 'gatekeepers' for gaining access to their congregants for the focus group and funeral observations.

[307] Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing,* p.5.
[308] Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative research,* p.150.

As for the style of the interviews and focus groups it is useful to apply the concepts of a *miner* and a *traveller* used by Kvale and Brinkmann which represent contrasting types of interview knowledge as respectively constructed.[309] As a *miner*, knowledge is understood as buried metal and the researcher is a miner who unearths the valuable metal. As a *traveller* the researcher is a traveller on a journey to a distant country that leads to a story to be told upon returning home.[310] I would regard these interviews and focus groups as fitting in with the *miner* approach as the data was unearthed from the participants for in depth analysis.

It was necessary for me to evaluate each of the interview and focus group sessions through reviewing the digitally recorded interview during the transcribing process. One of the patterns that emerged at the beginning of each interview and focus group was that they felt like an unnatural situation. This is because most of the participants were not used to being interviewed in a church environment particularly in an academic capacity. It was also important that I repeatedly introduced myself to the clergy and the focus groups as a *researcher* and not in any other capacity they may have known me in order to introduce distance to familiar social settings.

According to Gerardo Marti, it is important to introduce this distance where a new relationship is formed to create uncharted ground for these sessions to take place.[311] Another factor that made the sessions an unnatural situation was the presence of the digital recorder. Bringing and

[309] Steinar Kvale & Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), p.48.
[310] Kvale & Brinkmann, *Interviews,* p.49.
[311] Gerardo Marti, *Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Religious Innovation in a Multi-ethnic Church* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp.208-209.

setting up the recorder and placing it in plain view was an important signal that this conversation was somewhat official and not strictly private.

The beginning of each interview and focus group started with sharing the codes of conduct with the participants. At this stage, I attempted to reassure the participants by explaining that I would protect their anonymity. Also, it was important for me to establish a rapport with the respondents before the sessions formally commenced. I realised that building relationships of trust was essential for gathering such sensitive data to obtain truthful, valid and reliable understandings of the responses. [312]

During the research design I produced a sample of questions that were relatively static. What emerged during the fieldwork process was that depending on how the participants answered these initial questions they would be adapted in subsequent interviews that followed. In fact, the data I collected from the first interviews and focus groups were treated like pilot sessions as they helped me to improve the design of the interview questions for later sessions.

As each session progressed I was able to develop a closer, friendlier, trusting relationship with participants which allowed me to ask more nuanced and probing questions. This meant that each session gravitated towards more open-ended dialogue where we engaged in a more natural conversation. Many participants were able to eventually share personal experiences and displayed emotions that they would not have shared at the beginning. I found that sensitive or delicate information, especially relating to the death of a loved one, required a safe and trusting environment for participants to share openly. Once they felt settled, I consistently found the

[312] Marti, *Mosaic of Believers*, p.199.

participants to be willing to discuss sensitive issues, including their personal experiences of death.

As a qualitative research interview, knowledge is produced socially in the interaction between the interviewer and participants. The very production of data rests upon the interviewer's skills and his or her personal judgment. Therefore, by ensuring that I carried out the literature review first I gained a better knowledge of the topic which helped to improve my interview skills.[313] Preparation also helped me to improve the *validity* and the *reliability* of responses and to off-set the phenomenon known as 'interview effects'.

In terms of assessing the *validity* this is considered as a form of quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production.[314] In the first stage it was necessary to adopt a critical stance towards the responses of the participants. Research may not be valid where the respondent gives an inaccurate answer which he or she thinks is accurate.[315] There is a tendency for 'religious' people to express a belief which supports the official doctrine of their religious body thereby expressing a quasi 'normative' rather than truly espoused voice.[316] However, this practice is minimised by what is known as *symptomatic* reading, which attempts to explore their personal reasons for making any given statement.[317] If the participants tended to use statements like 'I believe that...' or 'my experience is...' rather than making any reference to any doctrine of their church, symptomatic reading may not be required. From my experience, Pentecostals tend to be quite bold and resolute about their faith and many of them are quite

[313] Kvale & Brinkmann, *Interviews*, p.82.
[314] Kvale & Brinkmann, *Interviews*, p.249.
[315] Referring to the accuracy between the responses and the reality the responses were intended to capture, Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.152.
[316] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.152.
[317] Kvale & Brinkmann, *Interview*, p.249.

used to expressing their personal beliefs with other people. During the interviews there was a tendency for pastors to share certain doctrines about death and eschatology by referring to material containing the official doctrine of their denomination.

Reliability pertains to the trustworthiness of the research data and the quality of the interview. Unreliability can be demonstrated by the interviewee changing their answers during the interview.[318] In terms of achieving this *reliability*, the aim would be to ensure that whatever the responses given by the participants in the focus groups in the hearing of other people are likely to be the same as they would give in private. It may be presumed that it might be difficult for a focus group participant to express views in public that differ from the official beliefs of the church they belong. Therefore, in order to improve the reliability of the responses, I ensured that the focus groups consisted entirely of laity without any clergy being present in order to eliminate any influence from their leaders. In addition, before the sessions started the participants were verbally encouraged to express their *own* beliefs, views and experiences during the session.

The issue of reliability also concerns the interviewer avoiding using 'leading questions' which may inadvertently influence the answers given by the interviewee.[319] In this study, the reliability of the data was improved by minimising leading questions through a process of *standardisation*. This involved taking a standard, consistent, non-judgemental approach for each interview and focus group as far as possible. Also, by developing close, friendly, trusting relationships with respondents it would help to elicit more reliable data. Furthermore, in order

[318] Kvale & Brinkmann, *Interview*, p.245.
[319]Kvale & Brinkmann, *Interview*, p.245.

to monitor and assess the reliability of the interviews, the interviews recordings were closely examined during the transcribing process.[320]

Gomm highlights the phenomenon known as *interview effects* which could also be an issue for some respondents as to what kind of person they were going to represent themselves as being at the time of the research. This is an effect created inadvertently by the interviewer's gender, ethnicity, social class, age, demeanour or religious affiliation. This is also known as *demand characteristics* which is what the respondent thinks the situation demands if he or she is going to come across as sensible, competent, spiritual or whatever impression he or she would prefer to give.[321] It is possible that the problem of 'interviewer effect' can also have an impact on focus groups. Because of the number of people involved, there will be plenty of opportunities for them to influence each other's responses. This may be a problem if the object of the research is to discover what each one thinks or believes independently of others. However, this research is equally concerned about what each one thinks or believes within the setting of their particular church or denomination. Therefore, the influence of the participants on each other is not entirely objectionable. It can be argued that what people do is nearly always influenced by the social setting in which they find themselves and people may be more comfortable in sharing their thoughts if supported by a group as it can be used as a simulation of everyday conversations.[322]

During the focus groups it transpired that the presence of other people appeared to have a positive effect on participants. Firstly, it encouraged more people to speak once the more vocal

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[320] See Appendices VI & VII for a sample of a transcribed clergy interview and focus group.
[321] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.167.
[322] Flick, *An introduction to Qualitative Research*, p.204.

participants had started to contribute to the discussion first. Secondly, often someone would say something of interest that would spark another person's memory about a shared experience.[323] This was a clear demonstration of how some participants' responses were influenced by the dynamics of the focus group which I believe had the positive effect of increasing the level of participation.[324]

It is hoped that any 'interview effects' were limited by excluding senior clergy from the focus group. However, there were other lay leaders within most of the focus groups who would have had an opportunity to exert influence on other members of the group if they wished to do so. Also interview effects can arise through the influence of the interviewer especially as I exercised a role of authority as an academic. Therefore, I was careful not to reveal my own opinions about the beliefs or practices of those I interviewed even when I was directly asked by the participants. I was also careful to listen and observe rather than attempt to alter whatever was being said, apart from when I needed to ask for clarification. It was not only important that I was seen to accept any expressed views of the participants but that I constantly demonstrated this through my facial expressions.[325] I tried to be open and receptive to whatever the respondents wished to share with me without expressing any judgement or objection and by maintaining a consistent demeanour where possible. Despite my efforts, I realise that an element of bias is inevitable in this kind of context where participants seek social or religious acceptability, and the interview effect may not be eliminated entirely.

[323] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.172.
[324] Flick, *An introduction to Qualitative Research*, p.207.
[325] Marti, *Mosaic of Believers*, p.205.

When it came to the interview sessions with clergy I did detect that there were signs of certain *demand characteristics.* In other words, I got the impression that most of them wanted to come across as competent, spiritual and authoritative. This was demonstrated by the confidence of their responses and how often they wanted to share how much they knew about a particular subject matter. There was a tendency for pastors not to admit that they were unsure about or did not know the answers to certain questions. I attempted to minimise the *interview effect* at the beginning of each session by saying that this was not a test and there was not a right or wrong answer to any of the questions. However, I suspect that as pastors, whether they are on the pulpit preaching a sermon, or giving one to one counselling, they are often judged by what they say. This does not necessarily mean that their responses were unreliable but maybe could have prevented some of them from expressing deeper, uninhibited and meaningful responses. Also, for the clergy I attempted to minimise the interview effect by taking a standard, consistent, non-judgemental approach during each interview.

3.11 Observation Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology which involves observing funeral rituals in their natural setting as an attempt to make sense of these rituals from the perspective of participants.[326] Observations are also a useful way of gaining the understanding of the social, physical and cultural context of the participants.[327] This method is suitable because it allowed me to approach participants in their natural environment and collect data directly from the source.

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[326] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical theology and Qualitative Research*, p.29.
[327] Family Health International, *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Module 2: Participant Observation,* pp.13-27.

The ‘operant’ voice of the TFV was in focus here as this involved observing what people actually do in their natural environment in relation to death.[328] The observations of the bereaved were limited to their corporate settings which included the funeral services, memorial services and wakes. My research included an analysis of rituals shared by both the clergy, the bereaved and the rest of the people who attended these events. It was important that I paid attention to the sights and sounds of each ritual activity including the verbal and non-verbal communication of both the officiating minster and the congregation during the service.[329] This approach assisted me in learning from as well as about the Pentecostal communities as I sought to understand the complexity and nuances of bereaved communities.[330]

The type of observation method employed in this research was primarily *participatory*. Participant observation is a form of ethnographic research used by researchers to study human beings in their social and cultural contexts.[331] During the research design process I was not sure about the ‘degree of participation’ that would be required as it was unlikely that observation method would involve *pure* participation. According to Dewalt, *pure* participation means the researcher sheds the identity of the investigator and adopts the identity of a full participant in the church.[332] However, the degree of participation was able to be assessed and evaluated after the field research.

Participant observation was deemed to be the most suitable method to supplement the interviews and focus groups. An alternative approach could have been to employ a fully ethnographic observation method supplemented by a few interviews and focus groups. The

[328] Family Health International, *Qualitative Research Methods*, p.14.
[329] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, p.25.
[330] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, p.56.
[331] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, p.25.
[332] Kathleen M. Dewalt and Billie R. Dewalt, *Participant Observation* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002), p.18.

reason why this approach was not pursued was because the level of integration within the community under study and the intensity of the time required would have been impracticable by a single researcher in the time allocated. It was more appropriate to combine a balance of naturalistic observation with the interview methods. Tom Wengraf recognises that these two methods complement each other. In my research, the observations enabled me to observe people to see *what* they do, whilst with the interviews the aim was to discover *why*.[333] This approach is also justified as it enables readers of the research to understand things from the point of view of the people being studied and improves knowledge.[334]

It is relevant that in some cases I carried out certain observations at a particular church *prior* to the interview and focus groups and in other cases the observations were carried out afterwards. Where I carried out the observations first, I was able to identify some of the culturally specific cues which allowed me to ask more appropriate follow-up questions and probes when subsequently carrying out the interviews and focus groups.

Before beginning the observation of each funeral, I had a checklist of topics as my 'aid memoire' which I generated from my literature review. These topics included: the deceased, the celebrant, the congregation, the music, the physical environment, the physical appearance of attendees, verbal and non-verbal actions. This thematic approach helped me to focus directly on observing behaviours and other factors that were most relevant to the research problem. For instance, for physical appearance I would make a note of the gender, approximate age and the ethnicities of the celebrant, deceased and the congregation. This range of information was relevant to enable me to provide a nuanced understanding of the different cultural contexts.

[333] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.219.
[334] Tom Wengraf, (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), p.3.

Also, the verbal and non-verbal actions of the officiating minister was considered important to enable me to assess how they use their bodies and voices to communicate their emotions which included humour, seriousness and lamentation. Being already familiar with a Pentecostal church environment, as an 'insider' I already possessed some knowledge of Pentecostal worship. This enabled me to concentrate on collecting data that was relevant to the research question. [335]

In the meantime, what I realised through this process of observational research is that it is as much a process of *excluding* data as including data in a manner recognised by Gomm.[336] There is also the danger of over introducing categorisations before producing the description of participant practices and thereby missing vital cues or data so I had to be constantly aware that I was not narrowing my focus too much.

Gold criticises participant observation on the basis of the risk of disrupting friendships, bonds or facing emotional conflict with either the researcher or the respondents.[337] However, the nature of the research meant that there was no need for me to continuously shadow clergy, the bereaved family or the congregation following the death of a loved one. These were simply event-based and time-specific observations confined to the funeral, cremation, and committal and/or memorial services. I made no attempt to meet with the church members socially outside of a formal worship setting or perform any 'inner-circle' activities as described by

[335] More about the insider/outsider debate will be discussed later in section 3.12.
[336] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.217.
[337] R. L. Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," *Social Forces*, Vol 26.3 (1958) pp.217-223 (221).

Abgrosino.[338] Also I was not immersed in the groups for any significant time to enable any such disruption or conflicts to arise.

A disadvantage of participant observation that I personally experienced is the difficulty of recording the data. It was not easy to make notes of everything that I considered to be important while I was in the act of participating and observing a funeral event. Therefore, I had to ensure that I could recall all the relevant observational data by writing them down at the earliest opportunity after I left the funeral event.

According to Etherington, a disadvantage of participant observation is that it is considered as an inherently subjective rather than objective exercise which is the preferred approach in certain academic schools of research.[339] Gomm argues that all personal interests and biases must be filtered out to achieve this objectivity.[340] Here objective knowledge primarily means knowledge which is public, open to scrutiny and accountable. In addition, objectivity also carries the implication that the person making the knowledge claim has had no personal interest or emotional involvement. I would argue that researchers are rarely entirely disinterested and I certainly did have a personal interest in the study. This does not automatically mean that my observation was inherently biased or that there would be any reason for me to misrepresent the data.

On some occasions it was necessary for me to ensure that I was able to distinguish whether I was *describing* what I was seeing, which is considered to be more objective or whether I was

[338] M Abgrosino, *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), p.55.
[339] Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflective Researcher: Using ourselves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004), p.25.
[340] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.18.

interpreting what I was seeing, which is considered to be less objective. Here is an example from my field notes of *describing* what I was observing:

> Most of the mourners wore sober colours – black, dark or neutral greys and beiges and most men wore dark suits.

In contrast, here is an example of where I have *interpreted* what I was observing:

> The congregation was asked to stand for the procession. The minister remained facing the congregation and spoke the words of the procession in the same manner as the rest of his address or readings.

Here I used the word 'procession' as an interpretation of what I was observing rather writing and describing the exact words that the Pastor used during this part of the service. However, if I described what I heard not only would this have been too time consuming it would have been unnecessary. In addition, during the interview with the Pastor involved, he was asked to provide me with a copy of the written liturgy for the words spoken during the procession. In this example, my prior knowledge about certain aspects of the field research was a help rather than a hindrance. This allowed me to record my observations more coherently and without having to focus on every detail which was unnecessary. Also, when acting as a researcher I am guided by my understanding of the local context allowing me to discern the subtleties within the matters I observed and incorporate information that may enlighten the research.

3.12 Insider/Outsider debate

At the time of the research design I was not sure about the degree of participation that would ultimately materialise, but I was not quite expecting the following to happen at one of the funerals I attended which I quote from my field notes:

> In the funeral of JM (affectionately known as 'Aunty J') I was struck by the photographs of the deceased on the screen at the beginning of the church services pictured by herself and also with her family as well including grandchildren. According to the tributes, she was an affectionate person, she loved Christ, loved others and was loved by many. She

> also reminded me of my own Caribbean mother (who is still alive) with a similar appearance and demeanour and strong faith in Christ. As much as I was aware that I was there in an academic role to observe and gather data as a participated in the service I began allowing myself to sing with the congregation when they sung, laughed with the congregation when they laughed and lamented with the congregation when they did. By the end of the funeral service I felt like I knew her personally. She became my 'Aunty J'.

Dewalt argues that a high degree of participation, which my above experience would fall into, should be avoided by removing myself completely from participating in any actions and behaviours which would distort my objectivity in the research.[341] In other words, Dewalt encourages researchers to remain as *outsiders.* According to Gomm, it is much more difficult to do observation in a context that is personal or familiar to the researcher than one that is foreign to them because doing so requires an effort to unlearn what you have learned. [342] Gomm also makes the point that where the researchers share characteristics with those they research it is also argued that this can result in the research of an *insider* being restricted to a local and narrow way of understanding the world. This has been referred to as *over-rapport* or *sympathetic bias*.[343] This also highlights the 'insider/outsider' dilemma that arises with this situation which is that if researchers get too close to their study group in order to collect their data, then this may adversely affect the data itself. Stringer recognised that there will always be elements of experience and discourse which researchers will share with one religious group; however no researcher can accurately be located as either a complete insider or a complete outsider.[344] According to Marti, the study of religion is regarded as posing a particularly acute

[341] Dewalt and Dewalt, *Participant Observation*, p.18.
[342] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.221.
[343] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.227.
[344] M. Stringer, "Introduction: Theorizing Faith," E Arwek, and M Stringer (eds.) *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*, (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), pp.1-20 (2).

problem for researchers who share experiences with the group as their immersion in their own religious beliefs and practices can result in producing biased data.[345]

As I began to understand the complexities of Pentecostal culture, I began to realise how important it was to grasp the assumptions of my own church context and religious beliefs. The American anthropologist, Michael Kearney, defined worldview as: 'A people's way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate way of thinking about the world'.[346] According to David Burnett, the term *worldview* also relates to ways of perceiving reality, and in doing so provides a deeper level of assumption than theology.[347] This means that worldview consist of ideas that give comprehension and sense to the people that participate within that culture, including myself. An outsider may seem 'blind' to some experiences that seem obvious to 'insiders' of another culture and vice versa. Burnett explains this often happens because they are focusing their attention upon different things and because we are limited cultural beings, we cannot comprehend all reality.[348]

Although I agree that some of these warnings are valid in certain contexts, I believe that there were considerably more benefits of being an *insider* in this research. I was aware that my worldview has been shaped throughout my life by belonging to Pentecostal church community. However, I believe that being a *religious* insider certainly helped with this process of building rapport with the participants. I could translate much of my experience into terms the participants would recognise and accept. In fact, I ensured that any connection as an 'insider'

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[345] Marti, *Mosaic of Believer*s, p.197.
[346] Michael Kearney, "World View theory a Study," *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol 4 (1975), pp.247-270.
[347] David Burnett, *Clash of Worlds: What Christians can do in a world of cultures in conflict* (Michigan: London & Grand Rapids, 2002), p.14.
[348] David Burnett, *Clash of Worlds,* p.18.

was communicated clearly to the church leadership and gatekeepers which helped me to secure their willingness to participate in the research. I could speak the language of an insider and was granted access that a complete outsider might have never gained which is in line with what other studies like Marti's have shown.[349]

I was also able to bring to this research a comparative perspective shaped in part by my Pentecostal faith. The use of experiential knowledge according to Marti is likened to 'a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept away by it, rather we are to raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process.'[350] I believe that by placing myself in human interaction with the funeral activities it enabled a better understanding of the various elements of these events.

As a black researcher I was also a *cultural* insider in respect of the BMCs in the study. As Ochieng discovered through her ethnographic study of people of African descent as a black African mother herself participants assumed a level of understanding from her as an 'insider' which she viewed as being beneficial to her research.[351] Similarly, participants from BMCs assumed a level of understanding from me as an 'insider', which was beneficial to the research.

Furthermore, as an insider I felt it was critical to position myself as a *participator* which came naturally to me as a Pentecostal Christian and this was my social location that invariably impacted the research process. One key characteristic of a *Pentecostal* Christian is that worship

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[349] Marti, *Mosaic of Believers*, p.200.
[350] Marti, *Mosaic of Believer*s, p.202.
[351] B. M Ochieng, "'You Know What I Mean': The Ethical and Methodological Dilemmas and Challenges for Black Researchers Interviewing Black Families," *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol 20.2 (2010) pp.1725-1735 (1728).

is not a passive experience. It is about constantly living and worshiping actively in the Spirit whether at Sunday service, private devotion or a funeral service.[352] I do not believe that this context of religious life could have been studied naturalistically without me becoming a participant observer of the studied community.

Being an 'insider' of a subject group has been considered as an asset in many studies conducted by teachers and nurses in their working environment. Participant observation studies of schools have been conducted by researchers occupying the role of a supply teacher rather than a pupil of the school, even if the behaviour of pupils is the topic of the research.[353] In these studies, it would not have been possible for the researcher to occupy any other position. Similarly, I believe that even if I chose not to participate in any of the worship activities, I would still be influenced by the process of engaging in the research. Also, by being empathetic I could remain sufficiently objective provided I was not in genuine mourning. I have no doubt that my objectivity would be compromised if I was too close to the departed or the bereaved family. Instead, I would argue that participating in the funeral as an insider was integral to understanding the breadth and complexities of the death ritual experience.

Nevertheless, I do accept that participating too much can be detrimental as it can get in the way of the observation process. For instance, during the funeral services I tended to keep my eyes open during the prayers so that I could pay attention to what was being spoken and what other people were doing. Therefore, the role I believe that I eventually settled into would be best described as a *minor* participator. As a minor participator I took part in some of the worship

[352] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, pp.219-220.
[353] Gomm, *Social Research Methodology*, p.226.

activities which made myself and perhaps others feel more comfortable but also distant enough to allow me to observe and collect the necessary data.

I would also regard myself as a *co-subject* of the research along with other participants which is a term employed by Swindon and Mowat.[354] Being a co-subject means becoming one of the primary tools that is used to access the meanings of the activities being observed.[355] As a co-subject, it seemed natural for me to participate in some of the worship activities so that I could experience what it is like to engage in the kinds of activities performed by those being researched. However, it was also important for me to embrace certain aspects of an outsider in order to introduce a degree of distance in this familiar social setting. I could not assume that I understood everything that was happening in their religious context. However, my role as a religious and cultural insider, particularly in the process of analysing the data, was to uncover what was obvious to everyone in these subject groups for the benefit of outsiders.

Tinker and Armstrong suggest that as the research progresses and the researcher gains more understanding, they attain the status of an 'uninformed outsider'.[356] This view is supported by Parker who also suggests that the researcher either is or becomes an outsider – even if the researcher begins as an indigenous member of the group being studied.[357] Therefore, I would also consider myself as an 'insider looking out' as this is a familiar religious and social setting, that still shaped my experience and understanding. According to Etherington, when a researcher is able to communicate explicit knowledge of their experiences, it can allow his or

[354] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical theology and Qualitative Research*, p.228.
[355] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical theology and Qualitative Research*, p.60.
[356] C Tinker, N Armstrong, "From the Outside Looking in: How an Awareness of Difference Can benefit the Qualitative Research Process," *The Qualitative Report*, Vol 13.10 (2008) pp.53-60 (57).
[357] M Parker, "Ethnography/ethics," *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol 65.11 (2007) pp.2248-2259 (2253).

her perspectives to be transformed by this dialogue.[358] I can agree that my perspectives have been transformed by this experience. Through my participant observations, I was able to co-construct new meanings to certain rituals and critically reflect on any pre-conceptions I may have had as the result of being an insider.

Therefore, applying the 'four voices' approach, I could argue that a 'fifth' voice could be added which included my own voice through my own minor participation in the observed events. Cameron and Bhatti describe this process as *reflexivity*.[359] Reflexivity accepts the impossibility of the researcher to stand outside the research field and seeks to incorporate that knowledge creatively and effectively.[360] To be reflexive, I realised that I needed to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social history as I interacted with the surrounding environment, the community of mourning, and to use that knowledge to inform my understandings.

3.13 Field work ethics

I will discuss three main ethical issues, which commonly arise in similar empirical research studies and which had some bearing in this research: (1) the impact of the research on the field; (2) confidentiality; and (3) safeguarding.

3.13.1 The impact of the research

This issue of ethics also arose in terms of the concealing of my identity during the observations. According to De Laine, it is considered virtually impossible for the fieldwork researcher to

[358] Etherington, *Becoming a Reflective Researcher*, p.29.
[359] Cameron and Bhatti, *Talking about God in Practice*, pp.52-56.
[360] Etherington, *Becoming a Reflective Researcher*, p.19.

remain a neutral, objective observer.[361] Some researchers such as Balch have in the past aimed at leaving the field 'untouched' by conducting covert observation, whereby the researcher does not reveal their status to the participants of the group. For Balch he felt this method was necessary to allow him access to the community, which otherwise would have denied him.[362] However, when his work was published, this may have led to a deeper distrust of outsiders and researchers.

Therefore, to avoid feelings of deception and betrayal I offered a full disclosure of my researcher status to the church leadership as the gate keepers.[363] Also, I ensured that I received permission from a representative of the bereaved family as well as the pastor to observe the funeral event. However, my participation in the observations remained covert to most of the people in the congregation who would not have known who I was. Nevertheless, if anybody asked who I was, I would have no doubt stated openly my identity and my purpose for being there. Therefore, I would have looked conspicuous if I was constantly writing notes and I needed to be discrete enough to ensure that my presence could not be seen in any way disrespectful to the bereaved community or compromising their privacy. After all, I was in the presence of a community of mourning in a church, a crematorium or a cemetery which many consider to be sacred spaces. Therefore, I relied on my memory and my own personal discipline to write down and expand my observations as soon as possible after the funeral event. In any event, in the case of the black funerals I attended where anyone is permitted to attend, those

[361] M. De Laine, *Fieldwork Participation and Practice: Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), p.124.
[362] R. W Balch, "Looking behind the scenes in religious cult: Implications for the stud of conversion," *Sociological Analysis,* Vol 41 (2) (1980) pp.137-143.
[363] The 'gate-keepers' were one of the senior representatives of the bereaved families of the deceased.

leading, performing or attending give implied consent to be observed by nature of the event's 'open' status.

Finally, it has been noted by De Laine that one of ethical concerns to consider is the harm the research might do to others or to the researcher.[364] In this research, during the funeral events observed, I had to constantly consider whether I was adversely affected by being amongst the bereaved and would have withdrawn myself if necessary.

3.13.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Focus groups raise an issue of confidentiality which not only needs to be respected by the researcher but also by the other members in the group. Where information is shared with other participants, there is no guarantee that they will respect each other's confidentiality later. One of the ways this problem was limited was by committing the group to a code of behaviour beforehand which included a promise to adhere to confidentiality before each session formally started.

Another ethical concern is ensuring that I did not disclose personal characteristics that could allow others to guess the identities of the people who played a role in the research. I considered it to be appropriate to record the name of the deceased and the date of death in my notes in order to later identify the particular event I was observing which I would later destroy. Also, the consent forms guaranteed confidentiality for both clergy interviews and laity focus group participants. Therefore, it was necessary to respect the confidentiality of the participants during

[364] De Laine, *Fieldwork Participation and Practice*, pp.126-7.

the presentation of the data by maintaining anonymity and using pseudonyms where appropriate.

3.13.3 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is discussed in the context of the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of both participant and researcher. Safeguarding considerations needed to be taken into account for the interviews, focus groups and observations. According to Wilks, one of the key concerns of safeguarding is that the researcher does no harm or cause offence to the participants.[365] For the interviews and focus groups I recognised that participants and researcher could display emotional distress/anxiety which can be compounded if the location or environment is unfamiliar or inappropriate. Therefore, I introduced control measures to minimise this risk by visiting the churches in this research project in advance if I was not familiar with them already. In addition, as I was working alone during the face-to-face interviews with the clergy, my aim was to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all interviews were conducted in a semi-public place and linked to the church. Finally, I made sure that I was not exposed to risks to my health and safety and carried out steps to reduce and improve my personal safety in accordance with the Roehampton Universities Lone Working Policy.[366]

The emotional safeguarding of participants is significantly difficult to predict and nearly impossible for the researcher to fully protect against. During the focus groups I was aware that it could also be a source of distress for some participants talking about a personal experience of death, especially if someone was recently bereaved. A significant challenge of doing

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[365] T Wilks, "Social Work and Narrative Ethics," *British Journal of Social Work,* Vol 35.8 (2005) pp.1249-1264 (1254).
[366] Roehampton University, *Lone Working Policy*. http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/uploadedFiles/Pages_Assets/PDFs_and_Word_Docs/Policies/Lone-Working-Policy.pdf, accessed on 21 June 2016.

research in this context is establishing at what point it would be appropriate to accept an individual who has been recently bereaved to participate in the focus groups. Any recently bereaved (for example, where a funeral has not even taken place yet) was excluded to ensure that the bereaved personal time and space to grieve were not violated. As for the others, since the sensitivity of any individual is likely to be subjective, allowing an interval of even 12 months may be inadequate as there are some individuals that may find it painful to talk about this subject even years after their loss. Therefore, before any person agreed to participate in the interviews, or the focus groups invitation letters was sent out to them together with a participant consent form.[367] Potential participants were asked to complete the consent form so that they were fully aware of the issues that are likely to be discussed. The consent form made it clear to the participants what they were agreeing to and the codes of practice which govern my work. This form also highlighted my willingness to discuss any concerns that may arise as a result of participation including if they are likely to feel any emotional discomfort.

During the focus groups extra care was exercised regarding how the discussion was affecting participants. The participants were made aware of the 'right to withdraw' at any time prior or during the discussions without giving a reason. Details of support groups was also given on a debriefing form in the form of internal support already provided by the church or external support such as local bereavement support groups.

The preliminary steps for observation mirrored the model established by the AHRC in their final report on *Spirituality in Contemporary Funerals*.[368] It began by asking the pastor from

[367] See Appendix III.
[368] M. Holloway et al, *Spirituality in Contemporary Funerals: Final Report* (Arts and Humanities Research Council, University of Hull 2010), p.5-13.

the church in my sample if they were interested participating in a research project. Permission was specifically sought to consent to their name and the name of their church being published. Once a list of pre-approved churches was obtained, I gave the pastor complete discretion to inform me when a suitable funeral is due to take place that I could observe. I did not approach any bereaved family directly as it would have been unethical for me to do so. Rather, the pastor sought initial consent from a bereaved family on my behalf for permission to participate in the research project and for me to attend their funeral service.

Before any observations took place a representative of the family was asked to sign a participant consent form for permission for me to observe one or more of the funeral events including the wake and the funeral service. The consent forms also made it clear to the family what they were agreeing to, including how the data will be recorded. The participants were informed that they had the right withdraw at any stage either before or after the funeral. If any families withdrew after the funeral event for any reason, any data already collected from the observations would have been destroyed. Finally, even though there were children attending the funeral events, there was no direct engagement with any children present at these events. Also, as the minimum age required for participation in the focus groups was eighteen there were no child safeguarding issues to address.

3.14 Conclusion

In general, I settled on the methodology and research methods suitable for the empirical data needed to be collected and analysed in this research. The literature review helped to shape my research questions by enabling me to identify the gaps in Pentecostal theology and by sharpening my focus on the relevant themes related to theologies of death which might be explored. Also, the empirical data captured by both the clergy interviews and the laity focus

groups represent the oral narrative which is an important source of theological enquiry in many Pentecostal traditions.

In terms of the discussion about 'insider/outsider' issues, although I agree that some of these warnings are valid in certain contexts, I believe that there were considerably more benefits of being an *insider* in this research. I was able to bring the benefits of a religious and a cultural insider to this research and a comparative perspective shaped in part by my black and Pentecostal faith context. Also, I do not believe that this context of religious life could have been studied naturalistically without me becoming at least a minor participant observer of the studied community.

The key methodology that underpins the whole research is the TFV approach located in the field practical theology. The aim of this research was to identify, discern and analyse the usage of the TFV approach to elicit a better understanding about ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death. By engaging with multiple theological voices, this helped to form the structure and shape by which the selected theology of death themes are analysed in following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

MULTI-VOICES DIALOGUE RELATING TO SELECTED THEOLOGIES OF DEATH THEMES

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be analysing 'espoused' voices and bringing them into dialogue with Pentecostal normative and formal voices in relation to selected theologies of death themes. By way of reminder, the 'espoused' voices represent what the clergy and laity say about the official doctrine and established theologies of their church together with what they personally believe, as analysed from the research interviews. Espoused voices also are a source of 'ordinary' theology as explained in chapter 1. The 'normative' voices represent the official doctrines and established theologies of churches and denominations drawn from their statements of faith and other official publications. The 'formal' voices represent academic theological discourse.

The empirical data has been analysed using the 'thematic' approach in this chapter as described by Carol Grbich.[369] With this approach, the initial stage of the analysis begins with the natural 'meaning units' of the empirical data being divided into identifiable themes. This method is based on a grounded theory, in which according to Sweeney *et al*, theoretical categories are allowed to inductively emerge from gathered data rather than being imposed on it.[370] For this research, the empirical data was divided into the following four theology of death themes:

a. Resurrection of the dead

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[369] Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (London: Sage, 2013), p.45.
[370] James Sweeney *et al.* "Practical Theological Research: A Case Study" in *Keeping Faith in Practice: Aspects of Catholic Pastoral Theology*, James Sweeney, Gemma Simmonds and David Lonsdale (eds.) (London: SCM, 2010), p.281 (273-286).

b. Material continuity

c. Intermediate period

d. Community with the dead

The first three themes will be analysed in this chapter and the 'community with the dead' will be analysed separately in the next chapter. The primary aim of these chapters is to look for the theological themes that emerge from the espoused voices and see how they converge or diverge from the normative and formal voices of the Pentecostal tradition. Where normative Pentecostal theologies in relation to a specific theological theme is limited, formal Pentecostal theologies are also brought into dialogue in order to help to articulate or interpret the empirical data. Where formal Pentecostal theologies in relation to a specific theological theme is limited, formal theologies from wider Christian traditions are also brought into dialogue. These wider Christian traditions are drawn from the patristic, medieval, and modern periods where pertinent to the discussion.

In Cartledge's study *Testimony of the Spirit,* each thematic chapter reflected the practical-theological dialectic but took as its starting point the ordinary theology of the participants.[371] Similarly, and as discussed in chapter 1, Astley argues for the relevance of ordinary theology in the context of the lives of ordinary believers which themselves have their own authoritative voice and intellectual integrity.[372] Following Cartledge and Astley, my approach in this thesis acknowledges the integrity of theology of ordinary Pentecostal believers as a religious reality in its own right, distinct from academic (formal) scholarship. Also, in order to appreciate the historical context of this Pentecostal tradition in which these ordinary voices are located,

[371] Cartledge, *Testimony of the Spirit.*
[372] Astley, *Ordinary Theology,* pp.1-4 & 13.

normative Pentecostal material relevant to each theme is brought into the discussion. Therefore, in each section of chapters 4 and 5 I take as its starting point the ordinary theology of believers (espoused voices) and bring them into dialogue with normative Pentecostal voices. After which the espoused voices are brought into dialogue with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal formal voices to enable insights from scholarship to influence the theological conversation where relevant.

4.2 Resurrection of the dead

4.2.1 Espoused voices in dialogue with normative voices

In this section, the espoused voices of the clergy and laity will be brought into dialogue with normative and formal voices in relation to the general theme of 'the resurrection of the dead'. Arguably, the theme 'resurrection of the dead' relates to the four theology of death themes. However, this section limits the discussion to dialogue between espoused and Pentecostal normative theologies. During the interviews, each pastor was asked to explain what they believed was the 'resurrection of the dead'. The senior pastor of the black majority church New Testament Church of God (NTCOG) stated:

> As a conservative [Pentecostal] Christian we believe that there is a bodily resurrection, and this resurrection takes place at the last trumpet. The last trumpet will call the dead in Christ up from their graves and that is when Paul says we shall be changed in a twinkling of an eye in 1 Corinthians 15.[373]

The senior pastor of NTCOG (Black Country) also responded:

> It is the coming back to life of the departed, Christian, or non-Christian. We believe that all people will be resurrected. I don't know how it will be done. Somehow that spirit and soul will be encased again in a new body.[374]

[373] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1), 16 November 2017.
[374] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (Black Country), 23 January 2018.

One of the laity participants of the Elim (B'ham) focus group described the resurrection of the dead by quoting 1 Thessalonians 4:1:

> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.[375]

In fact, most of the clergy and laity in this research tended to quote or paraphrase relevant passages of the bible to express their 'espoused' theology about the resurrection of the dead. The most common biblical passages were 1 Thessalonians 4:1 or 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.[376]

I also examined the official publications and websites of some of the Pentecostal denominations in this research for sources of normative theology, beginning with their 'statements of belief'. In the case of the Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP), the denomination of two of the pastors in the study, the following statement was on their website:

> God's plan for the world includes a time of accountability of all people (living and dead) before His judgment seat. For this reason, all the dead, both righteous and wicked, will be resurrected. As part of the assurance of this judgment, God raised Jesus from the dead and appointed Him judge (Acts 24:15; Daniel 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:30, 31).[377]

Also, EPC's Statement of belief states:

> The Future State: We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the final judgement of the world, the eternal conscious bliss of the righteous and the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked.[378]

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[375] V30 of Elim (B'ham) Focus Group, 14 March 2017. The 'V' and the subsequent number, which is this case is '30', represents the voice of the laity participant in the focus group as it appears in the transcript. See Appendix VII for a sample of a focus group transcript.

[376] These passages will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

[377] Church of God of Prophecy (UK), "Our Doctrine", https://cogop.org.uk/doctrine/, accessed 4 January 2018.

[378] Elim Pentecostal Church (UK), "Our Beliefs", https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417857/Our_Beliefs.aspx, accessed 4 January 2018.

These statements of belief or confessional statements appear to affirm the pastors' and the churches' belief in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Statements of belief are recognised as a concise, formal, declaration of the main tenets of belief within the respective churches or denominations. Some of the statements, such as COGOP's, were supported by biblical references. However, generally there is a lack of any critical discussion of the resurrection of the dead presented by these statements. Therefore, in order to gain deeper understanding about how each church or denomination views the resurrection of the dead it was necessary to examine other sources of their normative theologies.

Statements of belief by the COGOP are affirmed and expounded in their *Ministry Policy Manuals* which are published each year. They are based on the rulings and reports arising from their annual 'International Assemblies'. Their 2016 publication described the resurrection of the dead as the time during which 'all the dead, both righteous and wicked, will be resurrected'. There are a number of biblical references to support this statement which include Acts 24:15, Revelation 2:4-6 and Philippians 3:10, but again there is a lack of critical discussion.[379] The sources of COGOP's doctrinal statements appear to be drawn almost exclusively from the Bible. In fact, I examined several historical policy manuals of the COGOP going back to 1997, and the statements of belief have remained the same.

All of the classical Pentecostal denominations have other official sources of normative theologies which articulate how their doctrinal positions are shaped by their interpretation of scripture. For example, COGOP have two older publications – *The Church of Prophecy: History & Polity* (1977) and *Fundamentals of the Faith* (1981). In *History & Polity* the official

[379] Church of God of Prophecy, *2016 Ministry Policy Manual: Reflects Rulings through 2016 International Assembly* (Cleveland: White Wing Publishing House, 2016), p.167.

'Twenty-Nine prominent teachings of the COGOP' are explained and one of those teachings is about the resurrection of the dead. According to its teaching, the church holds to the belief in two 'resurrections'. The first will occur when Christ comes for His saints and 'the dead in Christ shall rise first' (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The second resurrection will be a thousand years later, after the millennial reign in which unbelievers will be raised.[380] In terms of the first resurrection, this converges with the espoused voices of the pastors from COGOP who have quoted the same scripture in Thessalonians in support of their views.

In the *Fundamentals of the Faith,* the chapter about the resurrection begins with a study of the Christian concept of death and immortality. The body is described as not being immortal during this life, but the spirit and the soul are immortal. It is believed that the body takes on immortality for believers in the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:40-44).[381] The participants in this research did not specifically discuss whether the resurrected new body takes on immortality for believers but this is closely related to the theme about 'material continuation' discussed in the next section.

In 1922, the EPC published *The Constitution* incorporating their first twelve 'Statements of Fundamental Truths' which included the following:

> We believe in the personal and pre-millennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ to receive unto Himself the Church;
>
> We believe in the eternal conscious bliss of all the believers in Christ, and also the eternal conscious punishment of all Christ rejecters.[382]

[380] Stone, *Church of God of Prophecy*, pp.247-248.
[381] Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, pp.375-376.
[382] George Jeffreys, *The Constitution of the Elim Pentecostal Alliance* (London: Battley Bros, 1922), p.6.

Interestingly, the term 'resurrection of dead' was missing from these statements.[383] However, the latest version of EPC's statement of faith includes the following:

> We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the final judgement of the world, the eternal conscious bliss of the righteous and the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked.[384]

The inclusion of the words 'resurrection of the dead' in their latest version meant that they affirmed belief in this doctrine more explicitly.

Virtually all of these Confessional Statements rely on the 'Bible doctrines method' for their presentation. In his book *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit*, Christopher Stephenson describes various types of Pentecostal hermeneutics which include the 'Bible doctrines method'. This is a method of systematic theology which presents church doctrine as a thematic organisation of the Bible's contents.[385] Most of the Pentecostal denominations in this research appear to have adopted this method in their presentation of statements of belief and supporting publications. Also, the clergy and laity tended to verbalise their responses using a similar Bible doctrines method. Therefore, in terms of the resurrection of the dead, we can conclude at this point that the espoused voices of both clergy and laity converge closely with the normative voices of their respective denominations because both sources rely on the same method for the reading of scripture.

Stephenson argues that Pentecostals should place less reliance on the Biblical doctrines method and critiques this method in several ways. Firstly, the unique place of scripture in theology and

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[383] Although this could be implied in the words 'the eternal conscious bliss of all the believers in Christ.'
[384] Elim Pentecostal Church (UK), "Our Beliefs", https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417857/Our_Beliefs.aspx, accessed 4 June 2019.
[385] Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.11.

its emphasis on scripture could be appropriated into a more critical method that is characterised by engaging with academic theological sources (formal voices). Secondly, the Bible doctrines method does not engage with human experience (espoused and operant voices) as a resource for doctrine. This method as used by the denominations in this research tended to summarise scripture or at times quote whole or part of a bible verse under a theological heading and with a lack of critical discussion of the scripture. Thirdly, if theologies are merely statements of the Bible's contents, then there is no need for Pentecostals to consider how existing doctrinal positions are shaped by one's interpretation of scripture. For instance, there is no indication within COGOP's policy manuals how their doctrinal positions were shaped by their interpretation of scriptures presented. Fourthly, the Bible doctrines method promotes a flat reading of scripture by giving equal weight to all statements of the Bible.[386]

However, Stephenson's criticism of the Pentecostals' use of Bible doctrines method can be challenged. According to Grant Wacker, Pentecostals have traditionally held to the position of the Protestant reformers who draw upon the Bible as its sole or main source for doctrine - *sola scriptura*.[387] The nineteenth century American Reformed theologian, Charles Hodge, writes:

> The true method of theology is therefore, the inductive, which assumes that the Bible contains all the facts or truths which form the contents of theology, just as the facts of nature are the contents of the natural sciences.[388]

Thus, Pentecostals have followed this method of systematic theology which emphasises the need to rely on scripture for all information relevant to doctrine.

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[386] Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology*, pp.24-27.
[387] Grant Wacker, "The Functions of Faith in Primitive Pentecostalism," *Harvard Theological Review* Vol 77 (1984), pp.353-365.
[388] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* Volume 3 (Grand Rapids, MI Eerdmans, 1982).

For Pentecostals, scripture not only serves as the primary source of normative theology for each doctrine, but it also plays a fundamental role in the structure of each church doctrine. Furthermore, when it comes to the resurrection of the dead it is a somewhat intractable and revealed doctrine; not the product of human reason. Stephenson himself acknowledges that dogmas are also regarded as creedal formulations of the doctrines that are revealed in scripture.[389] Therefore, for the Pentecostal denominations the use of the Bible doctrines method is necessary because people sometimes erroneously interpret the doctrines contained in the New Testament, despite the fact they are clearly revealed.

4.2.1 Espoused voices in dialogue with formal voices

In this section, the espoused voices of the clergy and laity will be brought into dialogue with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal formal voices in relation to the theme of 'the resurrection of the dead'. Firstly, it is important to point out that most of the participants in this research tended to focus on the resurrection of the dead within a future eschatological context. For example, the pastor of the Edgbaston BMC commented:

> My understanding would be that the resurrection process would be at a point in time and not impacting someone when they have just died. When somebody has died their physical body has gone and as a physical person they are in a place of paradise or resting, waiting until this point when there will be a resurrection of the dead in Christ.[390]

As we have seen, the statements of belief of the churches also appear to describe the resurrection of the dead within a future eschatological context. Pentecostal theologian Allan Anderson points out that classical Pentecostal eschatology tends to be future orientated. He explains that this is because the early Pentecostal movement began with a future eschatological

[389] Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology*, pp.17-18
[390] Interview, Pastor of the Edgbaston Church, 12 May 2017.

orientation as they believed that until the return of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit in the 'last days' made evangelising to nations throughout the earth a priority and a core mission of the movement.[391]

Warrington argues that Pentecostals are now much more prepared to analyse and question traditional Pentecostal eschatology and in doing so, some have arrived at different conclusions.[392] He adds that it is not unusual for Pentecostals to hope for the resurrection that gives meaning to the life we now live and forms the basis of a living hope that affects the entire Christian life, not just speculation about life after death. He highlights that Pentecostals are ready to live their lives wholly with the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit that influences their present as well as their future life in the Kingdom of God.[393] Similarly, Hollenweger critiques traditional Pentecostal eschatology which tends to be future orientated. He advocates that eschatology is not simply about the end times, but a key concept encompassing and underpinning all fundamental truths of Christian theology.[394] He argues that Christ is said to save us holistically through sanctification, healing, redemption, and this transformation is fully completed at the resurrection of the dead.[395] According to this research, the reason why there may be such divergence between the future orientation of classical Pentecostal eschatology ('future eschatology') and the holistic approach advocated by Hollenweger is because future eschatology is what most classical Pentecostals believe. Also, many classical Pentecostals may

[391] Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2007), pp. 219-220.
[392] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.313.
[393] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p. 394
[394] Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p.419.
[395] Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, pp.316-137.

adhere to future eschatology as they are not given much opportunity to engage with other approaches to eschatology such as Hollenweger's holistic approach.

A discussion about the eschatological role of the Spirit has been the focus of several Pentecostal theologians. Peter Althouse attempts to revise Pentecostal eschatology by shifting away from its future orientation and focusing on a form of 'realised' eschatology emphasising the present work of the Spirit. [396] Similarly, in *Baptised in the Spirit*, Frank Macchia shifts the focus away from future eschatology to the Spirit's work in making the human physically and spiritually whole during their lifetime.[397] According to Macchia, Spirit baptism suggests an eschatological goal for the gospel which must be preached effectively to the uttermost parts of the earth before the end comes (Matthew 24:14).[398] He argues that the judgment is prominent in John's implicit connection between the Messiah's role as Spirit Baptiser and the establishment of the kingdom on earth. Accordingly, the baptism in the Spirit and fire would mean the eschatological judgment through the coming of the kingdom of God.[399]

Following Althouse and Macchia, McQueen supports an eschatological foundation of the fivefold gospel that includes Spirit baptism which enables pneumatic discernment and faithful witness in Christ in the last days in which the world will be judged by the risen Lord.[400] Land also attempts to revise Pentecostal eschatology in terms of the passion for the transformation of creation into the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. In *Pentecostal Spirituality* Land argues that Pentecostalism lives in an apocalyptic existence made existentially palpable by the

[396] Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, p.61-107.
[397] Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grant Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).
[398] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, pp.38-48.
[399] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, pp.98-98.
[400] The 'Fivefold' gospel is Christological at root where Jesus is Saviour, Sanctifier, Baptiser in the Spirit, Hear and Soon Coming King. See Larry McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology: Discerning the Way Forward* (Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2012), p.324.

manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit.[401] He emphasises the primacy of the work of Christ, the transformative work of the Spirit and the way the kingdom of God is an in-breaking reality from the future.[402] Essentially for Land, eschatology and pneumatology go hand in hand.

Simon Chan agrees with Land's vision of the present Kingdom of God and sees the church as the eschatological community constituted by the Spirit in two ways. Firstly, the nature of the church's existence is basically characterized by its orientation to the future and beyond. Secondly, the Spirit reminds us of the 'now' and 'not-yet' aspects of the Kingdom by which we have a foretaste of the future kingdom in this life.[403]

The evidence in this research appears to show that participants tended to converge more towards the future orientated eschatology normative voices, rather than focusing on a form of 'realised' eschatology emphasising the present work of the Spirit as advocated by the above formal voices. However, further study outside the scope of this research will be required to determine the extent to which ordinary Pentecostals believe this form of 'realised' eschatology.

In terms of non-Pentecostal formal voices about the resurrection of the dead, it is worth bringing into dialogue scholars from the patristic period as this is where the term 'resurrection of the flesh' originates. During the patristic period, the doctrine of the 'resurrection of the flesh' (in Latin - *resurrectione carnis*) was incorporated into the Apostles' Creed as one of the core tenets of the Christian faith.[404] Tertullian was one of the key progenitors of the expression

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[401] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality,* pp.65-66.
[402] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality,* pp.36-37.
[403] Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition,* pp.110.
[404] Rufinus, *The Apostles' Creed: Textus Receptus* (c.400).

'resurrection of the flesh', and wrote one of the earliest surviving Christian treatises on this subject in his publication *De Carnis Resurrectione*. Tertullian sought to emphasise the resurrection of the flesh, through presenting biblical evidence in favour of bodily resurrection such as the witness of Jesus' resurrection in the gospels of Luke (24:36-43) and John (20:19-20, 24-29).[405] Although Tertullian emphasises that the resurrection belongs to something fallen, namely the flesh, he acknowledges that the resurrection can be called 'of the dead'. This in turn acknowledges that 'if a dead person is a body, when the expression 'resurrection of the dead' is used, it will mean resurrection of bodies.'[406] Therefore, the Pentecostal denominations' use of the expression 'resurrection of dead' in their statements of belief is not a considerable deviation from 'resurrection of the flesh' as both expressions have been used inter-changeably.

The Nicene Creed eventually opted for the 'resurrection of the *dead*' which may well have been due to a lack of unanimity around the precise nature of the 'flesh.'[407] Since the patristic period both Catholic and Protestant churches throughout the ages helped to enshrine the belief in the 'resurrection of the dead' as one of the core tenets of belief in their confessional statements. This also includes Pentecostals as all the churches and denominations represented in this research have affirmed the belief in the 'resurrection of the dead' rather than 'resurrection of the flesh' in their statements of belief which may simply be because they followed the Reformed tradition. Also, most Pentecostals followed the Reformed tradition

[405] Tertullian, *adversus Marcionem,* III.xxiv.3-6; in Oxford Early Christian Texts: *Adversus Marcionem,* E. Evans (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), Tertullian, *De Carnis Resurrectione,* (c. 208 to 211).
[406] Tertullian, *De Carnis Resurrectione,* [18,19].
[407] Council of Nicaea, *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* (c.381) quoted in J.N.D Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Routledge, 2014).

using the terms ‘statements of faith or belief’ rather than ‘creed’ which includes specific beliefs and emphasises doctrines related to that denomination.[408]

4.3 Material continuity

In this section, there is a dialogue between the espoused, normative and formal voices in order to help to articulate or interpret the ordinary Pentecostal theology in relation to the theme of ‘material continuity’. The second theologies of death theme - ‘material continuity’, arises from the research interview question: ‘Do you believe that any part of the human body will be preserved or restored in the resurrection or will it be replaced by a completely new body?’ According to Steven Davis, the doctrine of ‘material continuity’ suggests that for personal identity to continue with the human person after the resurrection there must be some material continuation of the old physical nature of the believer.[409]

4.3.1 Espoused voices in dialogue with normative voices

In this section, the espoused voices of the clergy and laity will be brought into dialogue with Pentecostal normative voices. The implication of material continuation is evident in this espoused statement by a Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) pastor:

> When the soul rested until the judgment this is when Jesus is coming back at the time of the *rapture* and during that period all the dead in Christ will rise. The whole body will literally rise up and at a point in time there will be a judgement.[410]

[408] Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, pp.513-522.
[409] Stephen Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (London: SPCK, 1993), p.93.
[410] Interview, Pastor of RCCG (1), 21 February 2017.

Yet on the other hand there is the evidence provided by the statements of some pastors that seem to imply a break from the traditional view of material continuation. By way of example of the espoused voices, the pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2) responded:

> The body probably will have very little resemblance to the old body in terms of the construction. With the old body it was necessary to have the different aspects to how you look and how you appear whereas with the new body it will be a completely new environment and the same sort of restraints will not exist.[411]

Similarly, the pastor of RCCG (2), responded:

> I don't think a person requires the old body in the next life as the bible tells us we are going to have a new body and a glorious one for that matter. We don't really know whether the old body will have any use in the world to come.[412]

In the focus groups, many of the laity also appeared to diverge from the belief in material continuation such as this participant from the Elim (B'ham) who stated:

> The fact that Jesus rose, He did not rise with his body in bits; he didn't rise with the blood running down him. Our body returns to dust anyway and we are also told that we are given a new body.[413]

The views expressed by other laity appear to converge with material continuation:

> I believe that the body is there [in the grave] but the spirit goes back to God and is asleep at this resting place. But I question how the spirit can go back to God if in the bible it says that on the last day the dead in Christ would be caught up to meet the Lord.[414]

> When the soul rested until the judgment this is when Jesus is coming back at the time of the rapture and during that period all the dead in Christ will rise. The whole body will literally rise up and at a point in time there will be a judgement.[415]

[411] Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 1), 30 December 2016.
[412] Interview, Pastor of RCCG (2), 25 October 2017.
[413] V7 of Elim (B'ham) Focus Group, 14th March 2017.
[414] V8 of Handsworth Church focus group, 28 September 2017.
[415] Interview, Pastor of RCCG (2), 21 February 2017.

The reference to the dead in Christ being 'caught up to meet the Lord' by the first participant is made more explicit by the second participant who makes reference to the so-called 'rapture' which according to Warrington is central to the beliefs of many Pentecostal and Evangelical churches.[416] The rapture is defined by Lewis as when the church expects believers to be suddenly taken to heaven from the earth at the second coming of Christ, leaving behind only unbelievers. The doctrine is based on biblical texts such as Matthew 24:36-43 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.[417] The belief in the rapture emphasises how the body will be literally raised from the dead and renewed at the resurrection which suggests a form of material continuation. Therefore, one would expect that Pentecostals who support the doctrine of the rapture should also support the doctrine of material continuation.

RCCG's statement of beliefs includes a reference to material continuation without making specific reference to the rapture:

> There is a resurrection of the body. Jesus taught us plainly that the buried body will be raised up from the tomb at the last day Job 5:28-29. Paul also explained this to us – Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:22, 42-44; Phil. 3:21; Dan. 12:2.[418]

This statement also aligns with RCCG's 2002 Sunday School manual, where they endorse the rapture and state that the dead and the living will rise in accordance with 1 Thessalonian 4:14-18.[419] In the manual, it is also suggested that the bodies of believers will be like angels at the resurrection and 'our body will be glorious, spiritual powerful and incorruptible like that of Jesus Christ'. Furthermore, it is suggested that the same bodies in the grave will be resurrected,

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[416] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.314.
[417] I.W. Lewis, "The Rapture of the Church," in Brewster (ed.), *Pentecostal Doctrine*, pp.259-71 (259-64).
[418] RCCG, Statement of beliefs, *http://rccg.org/who-we-are/our-beliefs/*, Accessed on 7 May 2019.
[419] The Directorate of Christian Education, *The Redeemed Christian Church of God: Sunday School Student's Manual* (London: Delta Publishers, 2009), p.60.

rather than a new body, although the qualities of the resurrection body will be different from the pre-resurrected body, without stating what those differences will be.[420]

Another RCCG publication, *The Last Days* written by Enoch Adeboye, the international overseer of RCCG, gives more explanation about how the rapture will occur:

> When someone dies, His soul and spirit goes to paradise while his body stays wherever he is buried or whatever he died of. When Jesus is coming back, He will first go to Paradise to bring people there to stay with Him in the air. Then these people will come to the earth and pick up their bodies wherever it was buried. As soon as the spirits and souls come into these bodies again, the original bodies will be transformed to come back again as a full trinity.[421]

The belief that after death the spirit of the believer 'will come back to earth and pick up their bodies' does resonate with the doctrine of material continuation as it suggests that an element of the old body will continue in the resurrection.

The COGOP theologian, Raymond Pruitt, also develops this discussion about the rapture on behalf of COGOP in *Fundamentals of the Faith.* He describes the rapture as the 'catching up of all true believers to meet the Lord in the air'. He also explains that the term *rapture* is derived from the Latin Vulgate version of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, where 'caught up' is translated by the Latin *rapturo.* However, even though he mentions that Christ will come in bodily form no explanation is given how the body of the believer will be *transformed* from the grave except to say that mortality will *be changed* to immortality and these terrestrial bodies will put on a celestial nature, quoting from 1 Corinthians 15:40.[422] As Pruitt was a senior minister within the COGOP international Executive Council, it would be reasonable to suggest that his

[420] RCCG, *Sunday School Student's Manual,* p.61.
[421] Adeboye, *The Last Days*, p.233.
[422] Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, pp.379-380.

teachings represented the normative theology of the denomination at the time. The doctrine of the rapture is also published in COGOP's latest version of their *Ministry Policy Manual* statements of belief,[423] which means that this doctrine remains the normative theology of the COGOP.

In the original twelve 'Statements of Fundamental Truths' of EPC published in *The Constitution*, there was no direct or indirect reference to the rapture.[424] More in-depth discussions about theologies of death and eschatology are contained in EPC's historical journal, *The Elim Evangel.* In one of its 1925 editions, there was a specific statement which affirmed the belief in the rapture as typically described by early classical Pentecostals, emphasising that "the dead in Christ will be raised first…" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).[425] Similarly, in a 1926 edition of *The Elim Evangel* the event is described as a 'secret rapture' during which time the second coming of Jesus for believers 'will be known to them only'.[426] These articles tended to focus on whether the rapture was full or partial or post or mid-tribulation but lacked discussion about precisely how the physical body will be transformed or maintained in the resurrection.

In 1976, Wynne Lewis, the former Evangelist Secretary of the EPC, wrote a chapter in *Pentecostal Doctrine*, an EPC publication, about the rapture. Lewis acknowledges that the word 'rapture' is not in the scriptures. It is a Greek word describing the event as *harpadzo* which is widely interpreted as a word to describe the act of being 'caught away', 'taken out/up' or 'to pluck' (2 Corinthians. 12:2&4; Matthew. 13:19; John 10:28,29). He refers to the Scriptures which describe the change that will occur to the believers at the time of the rapture

[423] COGOP, *2018 Ministry Policy Manual*, p.166.
[424] Jeffreys, *The Constitution of the Elim Pentecostal Alliance*, p.6.
[425] Jeffreys, "The King is Coming! Do you Believe it," *The Elim Evangel*, Vol 6.1 (1 January 1925), p.1.
[426] Henry Proctor, The Parousia and the Tribulation," *The Elim Evangel*, Vol 73 (1 February 1926), p.25.

which is referred to in Romans 8:23 as: 'The redemption of the body'. However, he does not address *how* the body will be redeemed.[427]

Lewis also points out that the main biblical passage which deals with the rapture is 1 Thessalonian 4:14-18, and he uses this passage to set out the order of the rapture.[428] The stage which is relevant so far as the doctrine of material continuation is concerned is when 'the dead in Christ will rise first' which describes when the body will be taken up from the grave (4:14). However, this passage does not set out *how* the resurrected bodies will be changed. Instead Lewis relies on 1 Corinthians 15:44 where Paul highlights that the 'natural body' of deceased believers will be raised and together with those believers who are alive will be changed into 'the spiritual body'. He states: 'The body of humiliation will be fashioned anew and so be conformed to the glorious body of the risen Lord". [429] In other words, according to Lewis, the old body will be *raptured* by being taken up and transformed into a spiritual or glorious body. Even if the old body has been dissolved or decomposed the body will be restored and renewed in the rapture. Therefore, the doctrine of the rapture appears to reinforce the belief that there will be elements of the old physical body that will continue into the resurrected body in accordance with the doctrine of material continuation.

The 1922 EPC 'Statements of Fundamental Truths' remained relatively unchanged until a committee was set up in 1992 by the Executive Council of EPC to consider revising it. One of the members of this committee was Pentecostal theologian Keith Warrington. The committee introduced the following revisions:

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[427] I.W. Lewis, "The Rapture of the Church," in P.S. Brewster (ed.), *Pentecostal Doctrine*, p.263.
[428] Lewis, "The Rapture of the Church," p.265.
[429] Lewis, "The Rapture of the Church," p.268.

> Fundamental 11: We believe in the personal, physical and visible return of the Lord Jesus to reign in power and glory
>
> Fundamental 12: We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the final judgment of the world, the eternal conscious bliss of the righteous and the eternal conscience punishment of the wicked. [430]

The report contained a brief explanation about why certain changes were made to each statement. Regarding Fundamental 12, the committee believed that a strong statement about the 'resurrection of the dead', which was missing from the previous version, and the 'final judgment' was necessary at this time to offset heretical or divergent tendencies in belief.[431] In addition, there was no explicit statements or comments made about the rapture.[432]

In the case of the denomination, AOG (USA), Frank M. Boyd who launched the church's Bethel Bible Institute in 1916 appeared to embrace the rapture and sought to bring AOG's views on this doctrine into full harmony with this orthodoxy.[433] The current formal statement of faith of the AOG (USA) on the subject reads as follows:

> We believe in The Blessed Hope—When Jesus Raptures His Church Prior to His Return to Earth
>
> We believe in The Millennial Reign of Christ when Jesus returns with His saints at His second coming and begins His benevolent rule over earth for 1,000 years.[434]

Unlike EPC's statements of belief, there is an explicit reference to the rapture in AOG (USA) statements. Although the Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland (AGGBI) is

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[430] *Report of Committee to consider a revision of the Statement of Fundamental Truths of Elim Foursquare Church* (Elim Conference, 1992).
[431] *Report of Committee to consider a revision of the Statement of Fundamental Truths*, p.4-5.
[432] The revisions made to the EPC's Fundamentals truths in 1992 remain unchanged to date. Elim Pentecostal Church (UK), "Our Beliefs", *https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417857/Our_Beliefs.aspx*, accessed 4 June 2019. Although I understand that a recent committee has been set up to consider further revisions to the Statement of Fundamental truths but this process is still ongoing.
[433] Coulter, "Pentecostal Visions of The End," p.90.
434 Assemblies of God (US), *Fundamental Truths.*
http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft_short.cfm, accessed 5 July 2018.

independent of the AOG (USA), towards the end of the twentieth century the statements of belief of both regions remained similar.[435] However, AGGBI has since changed its statement of belief to the following:

> We believe in the Virgin Birth, Sinless Life, Miracles Ministry, Substitutionary Atoning Death, Bodily Resurrection, Triumphant Ascension and the Intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ and his personal, visible bodily return in power and glory as the blessed hope of all believers.[436]

It is interesting that references to the rapture and premillennialism are now missing and the return of Christ is now described in much less imminent terms. This change is the result of the outcome of a debate between exclusivist and non-exclusivist premillennial approaches in the papers Bob Hyde and David Garrard submitted to the AOG General Council in UK in 2002 and 2003 respectively. Hyde argued that premillennial dispensationalism is only one among a number of possible eschatological positions.[437] A more traditional exclusivist Pentecostal position was argued by Garrard and sought to retain adherence to premillennial dispensationalism.[438] Hyde's less precise and more inclusive position seems to have prevailed.

In general, two significant trends can be identified from the examination of these statements of belief. Firstly, the weakening of the level of conviction articulated in each current statement of belief seems to suggest there is a less heightened sense of the expectation of the *imminent* second coming among Pentecostals in Britain and a departure from a uniform eschatological position.[439] Thus, the traditional eschatological views of classical Pentecostalism were

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[435] The statement: "We believe…in the premillennial second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" included in a previous version of the British AOG was published in Walter J Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p.520.
[436] Assemblies of God of Britain and Ireland, *What we believe*, http://www.aog.org.uk/About-Us/what-we-believe.html , accessed 5 July 2018.
[437] Bob Hyde, "Do Pentecostals need to be Premillennial?," A discussion Paper submitted to the General Council of the Assemblies of God, The Donald Gee Centre, Mattersey Hall, nr. Doncaster (2003).
[438] David Garrard, "The Importance of Keeping the Premillennial Rider in any Statement of Faith regarding the Second Coming of Christ," A discussion Paper submitted to the General Council of the Assemblies of God, The Donald Gee Centre, Mattersey Hall, nr. Doncaster (2002).
[439] Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, pp.162-163.

beginning to wane by the latter part of the 20th century. Secondly, the classical Pentecostal denominations may have had an implied belief in the rapture, but such a position is no longer explicitly stated in their statements of belief.

What we find in the normative voice is a discrepancy or the non-uniformity of belief regarding the nature of the resurrection of dead and in particular the rapture. The importance of the doctrine of the rapture appears to have been downgraded amongst the confessional statements by some denominations such as EPC or for other denominations such as RCCG there has been a tendency to avoid a detailed view of what happens regarding the bodies at the rapture. This pattern also appears to have filtered down to the espoused voices of the clergy and laity in this research. A lack of detail of what happens at the rapture regarding the bodies rising at an espoused and normative level means that it does not sufficiently supports the belief in material continuation and it will require engagement with formal voices to establish more clarity in this matter.

4.3.2 Espoused voices in dialogue with formal voices

In this section, the espoused voices of the clergy and laity are brought into dialogue with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal formal voices in relation to 'material continuation'. Warrington points out that many Pentecostals accept the doctrine of the rapture together with many other aspects of premillennial dispensational eschatology.[440] Davies also acknowledges that the rapture served as a major framework for the self-understanding of millions of Pentecostals and Evangelicals spurring a renewed vigour in traditional eschatological images of the second coming of Christ.[441] Davies argues that the rapture, as a religious view needs to

[440] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.314.
[441] Davies, *The Theology of Death,* p. 121.

be understood in light of an American attitude to death that is distinctive in its downplaying the natural process of decay in what Jessica Mitford famously called 'The American Way of Death'.[442] With roots in Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One,*[443] this book was a frank examination of the funeral industries practices and the extravagant ways we cope with mortality and treat it as a form of death avoidance.[444] Mitford's book and similar publications reflect American society's powerful influence upon the popularisation of rapture theology which is the ultimate mechanism for offering the absolute form of death avoidance. This means that despite many aspects of Pentecostal eschatology being toned down by normative theologies, this diverges from the espoused voices which continue to express the importance of these themes.

Even though the rapture remains an important doctrine amongst the espoused voices in this research, there appears to be a lack of critical discussion about the rapture by classical Pentecostals since the turn of the twenty-first century. An explanation may be provided by Gerrard Sheppard who argues that AOG Pentecostals embraced a nineteenth century evangelical version of dispensational eschatology which included such tenets as a pre-tribulation rapture and pre-millennialism. He also points out that Pentecostals embraced a fundamentalist version of dispensational eschatology which included beliefs in a pretribulation 'secret' rapture.[445]

Also, writing about the eschatological diversity in the AOG, Anderson and Menzies argued that whilst many Pentecostals believe in some form of 'rapture', there has never been clear unanimity with regard to the precise nature of the rapture, the tribulation and the millennium

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[442] Davies, *The Theology of Death,* p. 124.
[443] Evelyn Waugh, *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy* (London: Penguin, 1948).
[444] Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (London: Virago, 1998).
[445] Gerald T. Sheppard, "Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: He Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship," *Pneuma* Vol 2.2 (1984), pp.5-34 (5).

period amongst Pentecostals. In addition, Anderson and Menzies do not believe that the Bible gives clarity with regard to the precise nature of the 'raptured'.[446] Faupel explains that the doctrine of the rapture propagated by most early Pentecostals had its roots in the teaching of John Nelson Darby, one of the pioneers of the Plymouth Brethren. Darby taught that there would be a rapture of the church prior to a 'seven-year tribulation period' in the manner described in 1 Thessalonians. 4:16-17.[447] Significantly, AOG is the only Pentecostal denomination which appears to have traced the origins of their pre-millennialist views to John Darby in one of their older publications - *The Assemblies of God*.[448] Prosser points out that early Pentecostals were not in agreement or unity over the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine and challenges classical Pentecostals to think critically about the pre-millennial dispensational position they have adopted.[449]

Arguments used by Pentecostals to defend dispensational eschatology were inconsistent when applied to their ecclesiology. When the clergy in this research were asked specifically whether they think that there will be a continuation of our *personal identity* in the resurrection, the pastor of the black-majority Great Barr Church, stated:

> There are people who have reported that they have been to heaven. What is very interesting that those narratives are very similar from vastly different people. There is a strong suggestion that they recognised loved ones. I believe that you do recognise individuals in eternity as the essence of who you are can never be taken away.[450]

I also had this exchange with one of the participants in the Elim (B'ham) focus group:

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[446] Anderson and Menzies, "D.W. Kerr and Eschatological Diversity in the Assemblies of God," *Paraclete* (Winter 1993), pp.8-16.
[447] Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, pp.29-30.
[448] Cited in Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God, Volume 1*, pp.22-23.
[449] Peter E. Prossor, *Dispensational Eschatology and its Influence on American and British Religious Movements* (Tsr, 82; Queenton, ON: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), p.xi.
[450] Interview, Pastor of Great Barr Church, 18 July 2017.

LR – Do you still expect to have the same identity at the resurrection?

V13 – Absolutely.[451]

Most of the pastors agreed that personal identity post-resurrection would be similar to the personal identity they had before their death, but they were less certain about the nature of the post-resurrection body.

According to Warrington, many Pentecostals are uncertain as to the exact identity of the form of existence after death. He points out that while Pentecostals accept Apostle Paul's description of the nature of the new body in 1 Corinthians 15:44-45 who defines it as a 'spiritual body', this concept has not been subject to comprehensive critical discussion by Pentecostal scholars.[452] In addition, Pentecostals theologians who believe in the rapture would support the view that the body is not completely dissolved. However, they have not linked the rapture with the importance of the continuation of personal identity, so a gap remains in Pentecostal theology which this thesis is seeking to fill.

The senior pastor of West Bromwich Church finds support from the New Testament theologian Ernst Käsemann who suggests that the real point of material continuation is not its physicality as such, but God's preservation of each person's unique identity which will be recognisable in the eschaton.[453] Also, Stephen Davis suggests that the presence of the soul alone, which includes memory, personality and other 'mental' aspects of the person, must suffice for personal identity.[454] Russell Herbert takes this concept further by explaining the importance of the symbol of the resurrected body which completes the transformation of the identity that

[451] V13 of Elim (B'ham) Focus Group, 14 March 2017.
[452] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.319.
[453] Ernest Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969), p.135.
[454] Davis, *Risen Indeed*, pp.96-97.

is formed in present life and history.[455] Rahner also states that the transfiguration of the body, which is accomplished in the resurrection, becomes the 'perfect expression of the enduring relation of the glorified person to the cosmos as a whole'.[456]

In this research, a similar view was held by the pastor of the AOG (B'ham) Church, who shared his thoughts about what this resurrected body would be like:

> The Bible also talks about the corruptible which cannot inherit eternal life. So that body that has become decayed and corrupted cannot inherit. So, it needs to go through a transformation which is called the 'immortalisation' of our body. Jesus experienced that when he was resurrected from the dead. He could appear in one moment and then disappear. He could go through walls because he had a glorified body.[457]

According to Davis, this notion that resurrected persons will have 'immortalised' or 'glorified' bodies is based primarily on Apostle Paul's discussion of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 where he described the resurrected body as being incorruptible and spiritual in nature (15:35-49). Davis suggests that Apostle Paul tries to address the question about how the dead are raised and what kind of body they will have in this passage. Apostle Paul answers that the new bodies will be 'glorified' or 'spiritual' which suggests a transformation of the old bodies rather than a completely new body. Apostle Paul also compares the natural body which is physical, perishable, mortal and sown in weakness, to the glorified body which is spiritual, imperishable and immortal and sown in strength.[458] Davis asserts that the most natural reading of 1 Corinthians 15 is that the old body *becomes* or *changes into* (rather than *is replaced by*) the new body.[459] The reference to sowing is probably a figurative description of burial since the

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[455] Russell Herbert, *Living Hope: A Practical Theology of hope for the Dying* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006), pp.71-71.
[456] Karl Rahner, *Zueiner Theologie des Todes,* SZT x; English trans. (1975), *ideas for a Theology of Death', TI* xxiii, 22 & 26.
[457] Interview, Pastor of AOG Church, 9th September 2017.
[458] Davis, *Risen Indeed,* p.93.
[459] Davis, *Risen Indeed,* pp.99-100.

ritual of burying a body into the ground bears some similarity to the sowing of a seed into the ground.

In his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15, Anthony Thistleton argues that the problem with the word 'physical' is with regard to whether its opposite ('spiritual') means 'immaterial' or 'nonphysical'.[460] Thistleton explains that the notion of a 'spiritual body' may or may not be 'immaterial'; this is the Greek way of using the word 'spiritual'. In the New Testament the adjective *spiritual* (Greek, *pneumatikos*) nearly always denotes the quality of being led and sanctified by the Holy Spirit (e.g. 1 Corinthians 2:13, 15; 3:1.). Therefore, Thistleton concludes, that *spiritual body* must only mean a form of post-resurrection existence which is characterised by the Holy Spirit.[461] This view is supported by Fitzmyer who interprets the *spiritual body* in a Trinitarian framework to mean that a human body is transformed by God through Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit.[462]

Nicholas Wright points out that Paul wishes to emphasise the level of the *nature* of the new body when he used the words sown 'as' a natural body (*soma psychikon*) and raised 'as' a spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*). The two sorts of 'body', *psychikon* and *pneumatikon* represent a corruptible and the future non-corruptible one, respectively.[463] Wright rejects the words 'physical' and 'spiritual' as inappropriate translations and the question has rather to do with whether the future resurrection bodies represent lives indwelt by the Spirit of God.[464]

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[460] Thistleton, *The Last Things*, p.122.
[461] Thistleton, *The Last Things*, p.123.
[462] Joseph Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians, The Anchor Yale Bible 32* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008) p.596.
[463] Nicholas T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), p.349.
[464] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p.350

The pastor of the West Bromwich Church had a difference perspective:

> In my view, if our spirits are the real self then our bodies are irrelevant. If I am in a room but you can hear me, but you can't see me you know it's me, you don't have to see my body.[465]

Therefore, this pastor appears to have adopted a Platonic view that personal identity could continue even without a physical body as 'our spirits are the real self'. According to Plato instead of the 'self' being the physical body, lying dead on the ground, now the 'self', the true person, is precisely the soul.[466] For Plato, the soul is divine, immortal, and indestructible and death is simply the separation of the soul and body.[467] Also 'the immortality of the soul' means the pre-existence of the soul before conception at birth and the post existence of the soul after death.[468] Other Greek thinkers such as Origen agreed with Plato and believed that the soul existed in eternity in the heavenly realms before descending into this world as a conceived child.

The post-death eternal existence of the soul essentially means that the immortality of the soul is not dependent on a *bodily* resurrection – one of the fundamental creedal doctrines. The Pentecostal espoused and the normative voices in this research deviate from this view as they suggest that the resurrection of the dead is very much built upon a *bodily* resurrection. Therefore, even though the pastor in his comment said that 'our bodies are irrelevant' he did not necessarily mean that there will not be a resurrection body.

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[465] Interview, Pastor of West Bromwich Church, 2nd August 2017.
[466] Plato, Plato's *Laws* 12.959b, translated by H. N Fowler in the *Loeb Classical Library* (1914).
[467] Plato, *Phaedo,* 76E6, translated by H. N Fowler in the *Loeb Classical Library* (1914).
[468] Plato, *Phaedo,* 76E6, translated by H. N Fowler in the *Loeb Classical Library* (1914).

The second-century patristic writer Athenagoras disagreed with Plato and argued that the body will be raised from the *ground* and reunited with the soul. He suggested that for the same person who lived in a previous existence to come together again in the general resurrection the same bodies must be given back to the same souls. He adds: 'A man cannot be said to exist as such when the body is dissolved or completely scattered.'[469] Athenagoras is therefore arguing that for personal identity to continue there must also be material continuation of the body. In contrast, in his publication *de principiis*, Origen argued that the resurrection body was a purely spiritual entity and that the resurrection body is adapted to the spiritual life of heaven. However, Origen also insisted that the resurrection body involved a spiritual transformation without loss of individual identity as it possessed the same 'form' as the earthly body. In other words, he adopted the Platonic idea that the soul was the form of the body.[470]

For Pentecostals who believe that in the *rapture* their bodies will be raised from the ground their view would align more closely with Athenagoras' rather than with Origen's position. Therefore, even those Pentecostals in this research who suggested that a completely new body will be given at the resurrection cannot completely discount a belief in the doctrine of material continuation, if they also belief in the rapture.

Origen's approach was criticised by Augustine who interpreted Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 15 concerning the spiritual nature of the resurrection body in terms of submission to the Spirit, rather than a purely spiritual body. Augustine agrees with Athenagoras that personal identity requires material continuity. He argues that if a different brand-new body was

[469] Athenagoras, *Embassy for Christians and the Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. Joseph H Creham (London: Longmans, Green, 1956), pp.115-116.
[470]Origen, *de principiis:* Book II x 3 in *Sources Chretiennes,* vol. 252, ed. H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti (Paris: Cer, 198), 380.82-382.119.

raised rather than the self-same body they had before death the problem of personal identity would be unsolvable.[471] Augustine asserted that although human beings might not be able to locate and reconstitute the relevant matter of someone's body, an omnipotent God can do this very thing.[472] Therefore, without the benefit of modern scientific knowledge, he seems to suggest that God will only need to collect the basic components of our bodies matter and use them to reconstitute our bodies in the resurrection. Augustine also argues that the matter of our present bodies may be arranged differently in the resurrection, but the matter must and will be restored.[473]

The Orthodox conception of individual eschatology is based on the liturgical rites that accompany and follow the death of a Christian, in particular that which is contained in the Orthodox prayer book.[474] Accordingly, to Andrew Louth, Orthodox doctrine follows Augustine's belief that the resurrection body would be continuous with the earthly body; and he emphasises 'this would be the same body raised up, not something quite different.'[475]

Therefore, for the pastors in this research who believe that there will be a different brand-new body in the resurrection, Augustine raises the question that if the resurrected body is not the same physical matter which is constituted when our earthly body before death, are we essentially the same person in the new creation? However, other pastors may agree with Augustine that the matter of our present bodies may be arranged differently in the resurrection and be restored rather than be replaced.

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[471] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and love,* ed. by. Henry Paclucci (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1961), p.87.
[472] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love,* p.88.
[473] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love,* p.88.
[474] *Orthodox Prayer Book* (Eng. Trans. Archimandrite Ephrem Lash; Milton under Wychwood: St Alban & St Sergious, 2009), p. 105.
[475] Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), p.156-157.

The AOG pastor gave a unique perspective about material continuation in the following comment:

> We will retain part of our original body – even though people find that difficult to understand. But you need to remember when you go right back to the beginning [in the book of Genesis] God formed Adam out of dust and breathed life. That is soul and spirit that God put into him but Adam was made out of dust. I was just listening to someone who said that man has been preserving elements of their body and they are able to preserve a little piece of their DNA to formulate elements of their body after being dead for quite a while. So, there is scientific research to support this.[476]

This pastor appears to be expressing his personal views as there is nothing published by his denomination (AOG) which explicitly supports this position, as far as I am aware.

The question which was originally posed by Tertullian ought to be asked: what difference does it make whether the body is produced from nothing or from something, provided that it becomes a resurrected body? [477] On the one hand many Pentecostal appears to side with Origen by arguing that God was able to make creation out of nothing so he is able to fashion flesh out of nothing. At the same time many Pentecostals appear to side with Tertullian's assertion through the doctrine of the rapture. Tertullian argues that it is important to recognise God to be the resuscitator of flesh since he is known as 'the restorer of all things' and rejects the notion that the flesh itself should perish entirely.[478] Few Pentecostals would disagree that God is 'the restorer of all things.'

The modern theologian and philosopher, John Hick, also challenges the Augustinian position by arguing that the patristic writers were not privy to advances in the study of human physiology in the enlightenment. He has the view that the new resurrection body is a new and

[476] Interview, Pastor of AOG Church, 29 September 2017.
[477] Tertullian, *De Carnis Resurrectione*, (c. 208 and 2011), [11-13].
[478] Tertullian, *De Carnis Resurrectione*, (c. 208 and 2011), [11-13].

different body given by God. Hicks also believes that even with the scientific advances of modern technology humans would not be able to locate and constitute the relevant matter of someone's decapitated body, especially after many years or centuries that have passed.[479] However, this view was challenged by the AOG pastor who argued that DNA can be preserved for a long period after someone's death. Of course, the study of genetics is beyond the scope of this research, but this pastor appeared to have carried out his own personal research to support his views.

Similar cynicism is expressed by Rudolf Bultmann who finds the mythological and apocalyptic world view of eschatology unintelligible. Bultmann's program of 'demythologisation' is especially significant in relation to beliefs concerning future eschatology.[480] Bultmann dismisses all notions of last things found in the New Testament as later additions and submits these expectations to demythologisation.[481] Bultmann would describe these eschatological concepts as possessing an underlying existential meaning, which can be perceived and appropriated by a suitable process of interpretation.

In contrast, the reformer, John Calvin maintains an Augustinian position by arguing that the souls will be restored with the same bodies they are now clothed with and challenges the view that there will be a *new* resurrection body fashioned for believers.[482] Calvin argues against taking too low a view of the body and suggests that God has honoured our bodies by dedicating them as temples to himself and by ordaining that every part of the body is sanctified. Diverging

[479] John, Hicks, *Death and Eternal Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), p.186.
[480] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p.322.
[481] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology, the Gifford Lectures, 1955* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), p.43.
[482] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Translated by Henry Beveridge* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 2008), 3.25.4.

from Calvin, some pastors in the research appeared to take a low view of the present body. The pastor from the Elim (B'ham) described what he thought the resurrected body would be like:

> Not in the way we understand this physical body. It is a transformed body that overcomes the body we now have with all its limitations. There may be a resemblance, but it is not limited by the limitations we suffer presently. A good example of that would be Christ's body after the resurrection. What he had is a good picture of what we will have.[483]

The senior pastor at the New Testament Church of God (NTCOG) (B'ham 2) had a similar view:

> It must be a new body which would not have all the restrictions and limitations my body has now. I would like to think that not only would the body be transformed but glorified and the only thing in scripture as a model is Christ's resurrection. I hate to think that the body would be just a better version of the body I have now but a fantastic new body.[484]

These comments by both pastors do not rule out a belief in material continuation because a 'new' body could also mean the old body which is transformed. However, it is interesting how one pastor expresses some doubt about the idea of the resurrection just being a better version of her existing body. In fact, it may be possible that these pastors failed to fully embrace material continuation not on a theological basis but because they have a negative view of the human body in this life. Both pastors' views diverge from the concept of a 'transphysical' resurrected body which according to Wright describes the way early Christians did not envisage a body which was robustly physical but a physical body that transcends its present physical limitations.[485]

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[483] Interview, Pastor of Elim (B'ham), 14 March 2017.
[484] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 2), 12 December 2017.
[485] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, pp.477-478.

The concept of a 'transphysical' body is also relevant in the context of the theology of disability. Candida Moss explores the question – What does the Bible have to say about the preservation of physical disability in the afterlife? Moss argues that the disabled enter eternal life with their impairments, but they will not remain in that condition once they are there. There is an assumption that all ancient Hebrew constructions of the resurrection and heaven envisioned it as a place of perfection and healing. She finds this argument strongly supported from the passages in the Old Testament about the restoration of Israel (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5-7).[486] Therefore, Moss's view that those who are disabled – and which is therefore kind of intrinsic to their identity - will have at least initial resurrected disablement; hence implying material continuity of their earthly body.

Through the lens of the New Testament passion narratives, Jamie Clarke-Soles notes that the gospel of John presents both the disabled Christ and 'the glorified, powerful Christ', beyond all disabilities and limitations in the resurrection. By sharing in Jesus' disability, he argues that Christians can 'overcome all disability' by sharing Christ's resurrection and glorification.[487] Therefore, Clarke-Soles' view that those who are disabled will not have any disability in the resurrection does not necessarily fit in with the belief in the material continuity of their earthly body.

In response, Mitchell and Synder raise important concerns about what they term 'limits of redemption narratives'. Healing and resurrections are problematic insofar as they rely on the eradication of disability as the social constructs that propagate the exclusion and oppression of

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[486] Candida R. Moss, "Mark and Matthew," in Sarah J. Melcher *et al* (eds.), *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), p.292.
[487] Jaime Clark-Soles, "John, First-Third John, and Revelation," Melcher *et al* (eds.), *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, pp.355-356, (359).

people with disabilities. They argue that it would be more appropriate that instead of curing the disabled body to fit society, society were healed so that the eschatological hope would accommodate all types of bodies.[488]

The Pentecostal theologian, Amos Yong, has carried out a comprehensive study on the theme of disability. Yong's position seems to align more closely with Clarke-Sole rather than Mitchell and Synder. In *Disability and Down Syndrome*, Yong highlighted a threefold response to disability by the early church: (1) People with 'disabilities' are to 'adopt a posture of patient suffering dependent on God's redemptive healing meditated through the church or the eschatological healing of God'.[489] (2) Jesus' healing narratives served to perpetuate the ancient Hebraic beliefs which aligned 'disability' with 'sin, impurity and disorder' (John 9:2-3).[490] (3) The emerging association between 'disability' and evil spirits which derives from the gospel authors' discussion of Jesus exorcising evil spirits and curing 'disabilities'.[491] Yong also identifies how attempts at renewing the theology of disability are based on three basic notions:

> (a) that disabilities are either ordained or permitted by God for God's purposes; (b) that people with disabilities are encouraged to hope and trust in God's plan for their lives; and (c) that the church and society is to meet the needs to people with disabilities.[492]

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[488] David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Jesus Thrown Everything off Balance: Disability and Redemption in Biblical Literature," in Hector Avalos *et al* (eds.), *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), p.178.
[489] Amos Yong, *Disability and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), p.25.
[490] Yong, *Disability and Down Syndrome,* pp.25-26.
[491] Yong, *Disability and Down Syndrome,* p.26.
[492] Yong, *Disability and Down Syndrome,* p.38.

However, Yong's concept of the 'eschatological healing of God' seems to suggest that the resurrected will be healed from all disabilities in the eschaton. This position neither supports nor discounts belief in material continuity.

There was no discussion during the interviews or focus groups directly relating to a theology of disability. However, one of the lay participants made this comparison with Christ's resurrection:

> The fact that Jesus rose, He did not rise with his broken body; he didn't rise with the blood running down him. He didn't rise so that he could not stand up because he was in such a bad way. Which proves to us that however we rise we will still be okay whether we are burnt or buried. Our body returns to dust anyway and we are also told that we are given a new body.[493]

This view suggests that just as Jesus was healed from his 'broken' body at his resurrection, so too will all physical ailments be healed at the resurrection. Therefore, the ordinary theology of Pentecostals is likely to converge with the early church as explained by Yong that the resurrected will be healed from all disabilities in the eschaton. This view is supported by Miroslav Volf, a Croatian Protestant theologian, who argues that a cosmic eschatology is implied in the Pentecostal doctrine of divine healing. He makes the point that Pentecostals believe that the body and soul must be transformed in the eschaton.[494]

The pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1) also made comparisons with the resurrection of Christ when asked whether any part of the human body will be preserved or renewed or restored in the resurrection as we see in this exchange:

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[493] V7 of Elim (B'ham) Focus Group.
[494] Miroslav Volf, "The Materiality of Salvation," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* Vol 26 (1989), p.457.

> P - It could well be. If we look at the antecedent Christ was recognised when resurrected amongst his disciples. He was not unrecognisable. So there must be some physical traits that are maintained that give some recognition
>
> LR – Going back to the first fruits, do you think that it is relevant or irrelevant that Christ's physical body had played a part in his resurrection? Does that have any bearing to the believer's resurrection?
>
> P – Yes, I think so because it allows us to see the full gambit of the resurrection to redeem all things God has created. However, there are still some things that are ambiguous that I am not exactly sure of. So, you see the antecedence, but you cannot be entirely sure how it is going to play out barring looking at the old texts to figure it out.[495]

This pastor recognised the ambiguity of the antecedent of the resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of Christ but does seem to show some support for material continuation when he states 'there must be some physical traits that are maintained'. He went on to say:

> But now Christ has risen from the dead and has become the first-fruit of those who have fallen asleep... But each his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at his coming... because you have to look at two antecedences. Paul's antecedence is "Christ being the first fruits" and John's antecedence is "we shall be like him". In both cases, when Christ returns, we shall see a physical presence greater than there being this invisible soul.[496]

Therefore, he appeared to believe that the antecedence of Christ's resurrection was more symbolic rather than setting a pattern for the material continuation for the believer. In RCCG's *Sunday School Study Manual* it is expressed that the bodies of believers will be like both angels and Jesus at the resurrection, stating that, 'our body will be glorious, powerful and incorruptible like that of Jesus Christ'. The manual also refers to the passion account in terms of how Jesus retained his identity and that his body was capable of being touched.[497]

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[495] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1), 16 November 2017.
[496] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1).
[497] RCCG, *Sunday School Student's Manual,* pp.60-61.

Gordon Fee highlights the antecedence of Christ by identifying that 'first-fruits' is a term used in the Old Testament representing a commandment in Israel that men had to bring the first-fruits of their harvest to God (Lev. 23:9-14). Therefore, Fee understands Jesus himself is the first fruit of those that have been resurrected to God and afterwards there will be a full harvest of those who will be raised from the dead.[498] It was Apostle Paul who first described Christ's resurrection as the 'first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep' in 2 Corinthians 15:23. Fee argues that the resurrection of believers is contingent on the resurrection of Christ which continues in the life-giving Spirit and will be completed in the resurrection of the dead.

In terms of how the passion accounts describe the resurrection body of Christ in Mark 15:6 and Luke 24:12, Thistleton argues that these passages suggest that Jesus did not have an entirely new resurrection body but that the old body was utilised in some form of material continuation. Thistleton also points out that in passages like Luke 24:37-42, Jesus was clearly showing the disciples that he was not a 'ghost' or a 'spirit' and appeared to go out of his way by eating in their presence to demonstrate that he still retained at least part of his old physical nature. Also, by showing to his disciples that his resurrected body still bore the marks of his crucified body seems to suggest that he retained some material continuation of his pre-resurrected body. Karl Barth reinforces this view by stating that:

> between Jesus' death and resurrection there is a transformation, but no alteration, division or least of all subtraction…Jesus' body does not remain behind, nor does the

[498] Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthian* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), pp.748-749.

> soul depart and come to eat and to drink bodily. To believe in Him is to be on the way to the same whole manhood which is His own mystery.[499]

Barth's assertion that there is no 'subtraction' from Jesus' body at the resurrection also suggests material continuation played a part.

Perhaps the pastor of Elim (Staffs) can reconcile the tensions of the ordinary Pentecostals voices regarding material continuation who states:

> There will be both a continuity and discontinuity and this is where we are trying to explain the inexplicable as the Bible does not give us a huge amount of information, but we have some insights into this.[500]

Although this pastor could not explain how there will be continuity and discontinuity in the resurrection of the dead, drawing from some of the empirical data discussed in this section one, most of the participants appear to believe that on the one hand, there will be a *discontinuation* of the physical body; and on the other hand, belief that there will be a *continuation* of personal identity in the resurrection of the dead. Nonetheless, it is still difficult see how this continuity/discontinuity model fits in with belief in the rapture, which suggest there will be a form of continuation of the physical body, held by many ordinary Pentecostals.

4.3.3 The renewal of creation in the resurrection

The empirical data suggests that Pentecostals accept that there will be both continuity and discontinuity of the physical body in the resurrection. Given this it would not be surprising that

[499] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol. III, part 2* (T & T Clarke, Edinburgh, 1957) pp.438-526.
[500] Interview with pastor of Elim (Staffs), 10 January 2017.

some Pentecostals would affirm the continuity and discontinuity as regard to the renewal of creation in the general resurrection.

The senior pastor of the West Bromwich Church contributed to the discussion about the new heaven and the new earth after the final judgment stating:

> Depending on what your view is about the millennium. If we are going to reign with Christ for a thousand years, then it seems to me we will have new bodies when we are resurrected but those bodies will only become physically manifest in the new heaven and the new earth.[501]

According to Menzies and Horton, Pentecostals also believe in a 'newly constituted' earth after the final judgment where there will be an annihilation of the old earth rather than the renewal of creation.[502] However, bringing a normative voice into the conversation, Adeboye, General Overseer of the RCCG states:

> Heaven will be changed. He is going to, as it were, change the furniture of His house… He will refurnish His home and make it new again.[503]

This statement leaves open the possibility that RCCG may believe in the *renewal* of the heavens and earth rather than the annihilation of the old heavens and earth (correlated as said with a renewal of the old body rather than the introduction of an entirely new one). However, further analysis would suggest that Adeboye is utilising symbolic and metaphoric language to describe the consummation of the heaven and the earth after the final judgment. His church firmly believes as expressed in their statement of belief that:

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[501] Interview, Pastor of the West Bromwich Church.
[502] WW Menzies and SM Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993), pp.255-58.
[503] Adeboye, *The Last Days*, p.247.

> The Word of God teaches us that after judgement, this wicked world will be removed. God will create a new Heaven and a new earth in which HOLINESS will exist – Matt. 24:35; II Peter 3:12-13; Rev. 21:1-3; Is. 65:17; 66:22.[504]

In short, as this suggests, RCCG does believe that the fallen world will be annihilated. If we compare this with some famous formal voices what do we hear? In contrast to the position of the RCCG and the classical Pentecostals in this research Moltmann argues that even if God destroys the present condition of the world through fire that does not mean that he will annihilate the world. He interprets the verb used in Revelation 21:5 not as, 'Behold I will create' (Hebrew meaning *barah*), but 'I will make (Hebrew meaning *ash ah*) all things new.'[505] Moreover, the resurrection of the body implies that all of creation is to be included in God's final consummation and suggests that the whole world that God has created will be included in the eschaton as part of the new creation (*we* will be included in the new creation).[506] Moltmann cites Galatians 6:14-16 where Paul describes the resurrection as a 'new creation' and regularly sees the final act of redemption not as a *rescue* from creation but as the *renewal* of creation. He also argues for a continuation of creation rather than annihilation which he views as the preservation of the world and the 'preparation of its completion and perfecting.'[507]

Protestant theologian, and former student of Moltmann, Miroslav Volf supports Moltmann's position by arguing that the eschatological new creation will be a recapitulation of all creation, incorporating the present creation into the new creation. For Volf, the eschatological new creation is the basis for constructing an ethic of human work to be perfected and incorporated into the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, he rejects the notion that the existing creation

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[504] RCCG, Statement of beliefs, *http://rccg.org/who-we-are/our-beliefs/*, Accessed on 7 May 2019.
[505] Moltmann, *Coming of God*, pp.270-271.
[506] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), p.19.
[507] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p.183.

will be annihilated on the basis that it makes meaningless any effort by human beings to bring about social and environmental change.[508]

Arguably Volf does not base his theology of work on a general revelation of creation, but on the social ethic developed from the eschatological vision of a transformed new creation. Stephen Land agrees with Moltmann and Volf that apocalyptic theology must view the apocalypse as the separation of sin and death from creation, rather than creation's annihilation.[509] Land also argues that Pentecostal spirituality reveals a strong association between body and soul which will be transformed in the eschatological future. He implies that the transformation of the body is part of the fullness of salvation and necessitates the cosmic transformation of creation.[510] This involves the idea that the transformation of the body is part of the fullness of the resurrection and necessitates the transformation of creation simultaneously.

4.4 Intermediate state

In this section, the espoused voices of the clergy and laity are brought into dialogue with normative in order to help to articulate or interpret ordinary Pentecostal theology in relation to the theme of the 'intermediate state'. Where there are gaps in this discussion, voices from Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal formal theologies are brought into dialogue to help articulate or interpret the empirical data.

[508] Volf, Miroslav, "The Materiality of Salvation," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* Vol 26.3 (1989), pp.447-467.
[509] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality,* p.66.
[510] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality,* pp.113-115.

During field research another question presented to the clergy and laity was whether they believed the dead go to 'heaven' immediately after death, known as 'immediate departure' in which case there was no interval before the resurrection of the dead; or whether they believed that there was an interval before the resurrection of the dead known as the 'intermediate state.' The 'intermediate state' is defined by Davis as a waiting place where the deceased will temporarily experience a form of death from which there will be a 'general resurrection'.[511] According to Oscar Cullmann's reading of 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians,[512] the 'general resurrection' denotes the resurrection of the dead which occurs for the whole people of God at one moment at the end of history. In order to differentiate and discriminate the data regarding the intermediate state it is necessary to speak of a first-person perspective on the intermediate state (the deceased believer) and a third-person perspective (the living observers) on the same state. This distinction as we will see applies across the espoused, normative, and formal voices.[513]

4.4.1 Espoused voices in dialogue with normative voices

In this section, the espoused voices of the clergy and laity are brought into dialogue with normative voices. The laity participants were asked what happens to the soul immediately after death some of the participants at the AOG Church responded as follows:

> V10 – If you die in the Lord it goes to heaven, however, if you do not die in the Lord it goes to hell.
>
> V12 – When a person dies in Christ the spirit goes to paradise.[514]

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[511] Davis, *Risen Indeed*, pp.87-88.
[512] Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1958).
[513] This distinction in perspective was theory-neutral and was in fact a hermeneutical device necessary to describe the data without affirming any of them.
[514] V9 of AOG Church Focus Group, 9 November 2017.

Amongst the participants of other focus groups, the evidence is that they seem to align themselves with the belief in an 'immediate departure'. For the clergy, the senior pastor of RCCG gave a broad response as follows:

> There are three schools of thought here. Firstly, is that immediately after someone dies one goes to 'Abrahams Bosom.' That is no other than the presence of the Lord himself. So as soon as one dies, he goes to a place of home but not the heaven that we are expecting straight away, waiting for Christ to come back. Another school of thought is that as soon as one dies one remains in the grave but on the day of resurrection when Christ appears, or the rapture, then the dead in Christ will rise up from the grave… The third school of thought is that when one dies, he or she immediately goes to heaven depending on how the person has lived his life here [on earth] or goes straight to hell. However, this school of thought is questionable as the bible says that when Christ appears the dead in Christ shall rise then [not immediately on death] and we would have our bodies changed and be caught up with Him in the air. [515]

Yet though he is aware of these other schools of thought, this pastor went on to say that he would subscribe to the first school of thought. Perhaps most distinctively, amongst the other clergy and the laity, apart from using biblical metaphors to describe the 'intermediate state', there was a lack of depth of knowledge about its meaning and purpose. Therefore, normative voices are brought into dialogue to shed more light on the Pentecostal understanding of the intermediate state.

When we compare these statements with the only source of normative voices I was to identify amongst the Pentecostal denominations in the study, Raymond Pruitt, a normative voice of the COGOP. He argues in *Fundamentals of the Faith* that believers do not immediately go to their final reward in heaven ('immediate departure') and there was an interim before the resurrection of the dead (the 'intermediate state'). Pruitt does not make a distinction between the first-person perspective and the third person perspective but if there is an interim between death and

[515] Interview, Pastor of RCCG (2).

resurrection I take this to be a claim regarding the first-person perspective. Otherwise, Pruitt would be making the trivial claim of an interim between death and resurrection.

Pruitt argues that the final reward in heaven occurs at the time of the 'general resurrection' and the same is true as regards to unbelievers and their final punishment. He also suggests that between death and the resurrection – during the intermediate period - believers are said to be 'with the Lord' (2 Corinthians. 5:8). At the same time Pruitt, quoting Revelation 14:13, notes that believers are in a 'state of rest' during the intermediate period. Pruitt does not explicitly pinpoint where believers would be while they rest but he does locate them 'before the throne of God' in accordance with Revelation 7:15.[516] If we compare Pruitt's normative voice with espoused voices, some pastors described the period where individuals go immediately after death as 'paradise'. The AOG pastor referred to Apostle Paul's mention of a 'third heaven' implying that there are different levels in heaven: the third heaven being God's abode; the other two levels below it being the space above the atmosphere beyond earth, ('the starry heavens') and the atmosphere above the earth (essentially the sky). However, the AOG pastor was unclear if he believed that paradise is the third heaven or some other place. Another pastor used a similar concept of 'being present with the Lord'. The pastor of NTCOG used the term 'the immediate presence of Christ' to describe his thoughts on the intermediate state:

> It is not like they are in the romanticism of heaven chilling on a cloud. The immediate presence of Christ is a type of rest while we are still waiting for the rapture.[517]

Note the concept of being in the presence of the Lord and also the concept of 'waiting'. To be 'waiting' in the presence of someone is surely implied a conscious state in some sense. As said, the normative voice of Pruitt describes the 'intermediate state' as a time during which believers

[516] Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, p.277.
[517] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1).

are in a state of rest while they wait for the resurrection. Accordingly, Pruitt appears to mean that although believers are in a state of *rest* this does not equate to a non-conscious 'soul-sleep' but to be 'with the Lord' they must be in a conscious (first-person perspective) state. Many of the espoused voices in this research also appear to use this language of 'sleep' in a similar way. For example, the pastor of COGOP stated:

> Biblically when you look at it closely it is clear that when people die as Christians they do not necessarily go straight to heaven, they rest, and they are in a period of sleep awaiting the resurrection.[518]

Here we note rest described in terms of a period of sleep. Again, a lay participant stated:

> I think we will be sleeping until the Day of Judgment and then we will be awake. But it will not be the sleep as we know sleep to be.[519]

When the participants were asked the question whether the soul will be conscious or conscious immediately after death, most pastors seem to believe that the soul would be conscious. For example, the pastor of the West Bromwich Church responded:

> I do not believe that anybody truly understands what happens to the departed soul. People who share their near-death experiences… describe their encounter in another dimension. Many of them were 'asleep' or declared dead by the doctors and some were transitioning over, went into another dimension and had various experiences. The deceased may be asleep to us on earth but there appears to be a life after death.[520]

Note that this pastor uses 'sleep' as another way of describing a person who is 'declared dead' by the medical practitioner. In other words, from the third person perspective the person is sleeping pending the resurrection. But this does not exclude a first-person perspective where the soul of the person is in a conscious state. As the pastor says: the person 'went into another dimension and had various experiences' which suggests that they must have been conscious.

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[518] Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 1).
[519] V13 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[520] Interview, Pastor of West Bromwich Church

This view is supported by the normative voice of Pruitt who argues that both believers and unbelievers will be conscious in the intermediate state. He also quotes Apostle Paul's declaration about being absent from the body and 'present with the Lord' (2 Cor. 5:6-9) as evidence that confirms that consciousness continues after physical death.[521]

Pruitt also argues that sleep is spoken of as the loss of consciousness to the world, but also as an awakening to an afterlife of joy and peace. As he explains:

> Those who believe in 'soul sleep' tend to see the relation of soul and body as that of music to harp. When the harp is destroyed, so is the music. But the scriptural view is best illustrated by that of the rower and boat. When the boat is destroyed, the rower remains. [522]

Pruitt refers to Martin Luther's concept of 'soul sleep.' Soul sleep teaches that, upon death, the soul of each person 'sleeps' until the general resurrection and final judgment. Luther generally understood the condition of the disembodied soul to be in a deep and unconscious dreamless sleep but not dissolved. [523] Thus, Pruitt disagrees with this concept of 'soul sleep' and argues that believers are enjoying a conscious existence during the intermediate state 'in communion with the triune God.[524] In order to develop this discussion about the consciousness or non-consciousness of the soul during the 'intermediate state' it is necessary to bring formal voices into dialogue.

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[521] Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith,* p.277.
[522] Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith,* p.278.
[523] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, vol.* 28 *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7 and 15 and 1 Timothy*, Hilton Oswald (ed.) (St Louis: Concordia, 1973).
[524] Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith,* p.279.

4.4.2 Espoused voices in dialogue with formal voices

There are formal voices across different Christian traditions that hold to a conscious intermediate state pending resurrection. Beginning with Pentecostals, Warrington suggests that Pentecostals have tended to describe life after death as initially occurring in an 'intermediate state', 'where the person consciously exists in a disembodied state but with Jesus.'[525] Warrington also goes on to say that the Lutheran concept of 'soul sleep' which he describes as 'a period of hibernation' has been rejected by Pentecostals.[526] Significantly, the majority of the espoused voices in this research appear to favour an immediate departure rather than an intermediate state advocated by Warrington and Pruitt. However, it quite possible that these espoused voices were being expressed from a first-person rather than a third person perspective. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the majority of the espoused, normative and formal voices orientate toward an intermediate conscious state. Further dialogue with formal voices will help to clarify this position.

One of the earliest academic discussions about the intermediate state arises from the Assyrian Christian writer, Tatian of Adiabene (c.110–c.180) who argued that the human soul is not naturally immortal but is dissolved with the body and rises again at the resurrection. He believed, therefore, that souls remain in an unconscious state during the intermediate state between death and the resurrection.[527] Pope Benedict XII declared in the fourteenth century:

> There is *purgatory that* is a state of punishment and purification, which the souls which are still burdened by venial sins and the temporal punishment for sins are purified.[528]

[525] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.317.
[526] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* pp.317-318.
[527] Tatian, *Address,* 42 (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 2).
[528] Pope Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336, *On the Beatific Vision of God;* in Papal Encyclicals Online, January 2008.

This state of punishment of purgatory places souls in a conscious state while they are being purified. Reformers such as Martin Luther saw this doctrine of purgatory as compromising the 'once –for –all' sufficiency of Christ whose death and resurrection covered all sin. Although, Luther eventually came to a view which more closely aligned with Tatian and generally understood the condition of the disembodied soul to be in a deep and non-conscious dreamless sleep.[529] What constitutes soul-sleeping is the view that from a first-person perspective the person is sleeping; i.e. their soul is non-conscious pending the resurrection. Perhaps Luther considered soul-sleeping as the only way to counter the Catholic teaching that purgatory comprised of souls within a conscious state. However, one does not have to believe in purgatory to hold to the conscious state view. Hence, when John Calvin challenged the Lutheran teaching that souls enter a state of non-conscious sleep during the intermediate period, while they were separated from the body, he was only reaffirming a tradition that had been the mainstay of theological thought for centuries. Calvin argued that believers who died before the second advent of Christ did not sleep but rather entered immediately into the 'Kingdom of God'. Crucially for Calvin, that rest is not a sleep; it is not non-conscious, it is conscious, and believers are sharing in the Kingdom of God, but they will not be able to enter into the final glory until after the Day of Judgment. Accordingly, Calvin regarded the intermediate state as a period of waiting, but one that enables us already to experience a type of resurrection.[530]

While the espoused voice seems to indicate an affirmation of the traditional theology of a 'conscious intermediate state' between death and resurrection, it also appears to evidence the presence of the more radical theology of Christian Mortalism in the form of soul-sleeping.

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[529] Luther, *Luther's Works, vol.* 28 *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7 and 15 and 1 Timothy.*
[530] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Translated by Henry Beveridge* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 2008), 3.25.4.

According to Overton and Milton, Christian Mortalism takes two main forms, which can be difficult to distinguish. The first, known as 'thnetopsychism' – soul death, is the belief that the soul dies with the body. The second, known as 'psychopannychism' or 'psychosomnolence' – soul sleeping, holds that the soul in some sense sleeps after the death of the body. Both of these alternatives imply an immediate departure and assert there can be no such experience of the intermediate state from a first-person perspective if the soul is 'non-conscious' – 'dead' or 'sleeping.'[531] However, the espoused voices do not seem to support any form of Christian Mortalism where the soul is not conscious of anything.

In contrast to either form of Christian Mortalism, Calvin's divergence from 'soul sleep' appears to be more congenial to the espoused and normative voices in this study. Similarly, Thistleton questions whether the concept of the intermediate state or 'soul sleep' is present in the Bible at all. The concept of the deceased being 'asleep' is also used by Apostle Paul who said, 'but now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept' (1 Cor. 15:20) and also used the famous words: 'We shall not all sleep' (1 Corinthians. 15:51).[532] Paul also speaks of those who have fallen asleep but who will wake up at the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Thiselton points out in the New Testament the word 'sleep' is also used as a standard euphemism for death and it does not refer to an 'intermediate state' (John 11:11; 1 Cor. 7:39). Therefore, I contend that Paul's use of the term 'sleep' has nothing to do with the teaching of 'soul-sleeping' *per se* as it possible to speak of the person sleeping after death while holding that their soul is in a conscious intermediate state.

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[531] O Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p.178.
[532] Thiselton, *The Last Things,* p.69.

Furthermore, according to Davis, the picture of a very recent dead person is one that closely resembles the former living person. It is relatively easy to speak of them as asleep.[533] He argues that the soul must be conscious and the Bible only uses the concept of sleep as a metaphor such as in Luke 8:52 and 1 Corinthians 15:20. Davis also asserts that if a soul is not in any sense aware of the presence of God in what sense can it be said to be in his presence. In other words, he expects human beings to be conscious in the intermediate state and to have experiences, knowledge, feelings, and thoughts – similar to how personalities are manifested while they were living.[534] Where many of the espoused voices expressed that after death people will be in a state of 'sleep' after the resurrection, it is important to clarify whether they meant individuals would be conscious or unconscious.

In agreement with Davis, the pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2) looked to Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 when he asserted that both individuals were in a state of consciousness:

> I believe that the soul [after death] will be very conscious, and I base that on the scriptures. For instance, in Luke there is an account about Lazarus and the rich man, and both were in a state of consciousness.[535]

In fact, the concept of 'Abraham's Bosom' comes from the same gospel account and was a term used by some of the other pastors when describing the intermediate state.

The New Testament scholar Joel Green regards this gospel account to be a parable as indicated by its structure, style, and language. Green describes 'Abraham's Bosom' as a 'place of blessedness' and as Lazarus' position of intimacy and honour at the heavenly banquet (cf. 13:28). Green points out that this parable is often taken as support for belief in the intermediate

[533] Davis, *Risen Indeed*, pp.87-88.
[534] Davis, *Risen Indeed*, pp.90-91.
[535] Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2).

state due to the notion of the temporary disembodied existence of a soul which remains in 'Abraham's Bosom' until the general resurrection.[536] However, John Holland argues that Luke was using this concept metaphorically to contrast the torment of the experience of hell by the rich man, with the tranquil intimacy of Lazarus with the great father Abraham. [537]

The pastor of Elim (Staffs) also supported the possibility of a conscious existence of the departed soul by saying:

> Most Christian pastors, especially in my stream of Pentecostalism, would believe that once a person dies their conscious existence continues. This will be based on such verses as when Jesus said on the cross: "today you will be with me in paradise", and the emphasis is on the words "with me" which implies a consciousness of existence.[538]

Other pastors also cited Luke 23:43 where Jesus himself declares that 'today' the thief on the cross will be with him in 'paradise'. However, rather than using this text to support the view that the dead are raised into *heaven* – the final resting place - as we have seen, the pastors have attempted to describe 'paradise' as some alternative place.

According to Holland, within the context of the Lukan passage, if Jesus said to the thief, 'today you will be with me in paradise', it suggests that 'paradise' is synonymous with heaven. Therefore, it would be expected that the repentant criminal would follow Jesus into heaven immediately after his death.[539] Cullmann disagrees with Holland by arguing that, 'today you will be with me in paradise does not prove that the resurrection of the body takes place immediately after death. He asserts that this image pictures the condition of those who die in

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[536] Joel B. Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), p.607.
[537] John Holland, *World Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:18-34* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), p. 829.
[538] Interview, Pastor of Elim (Staffs).
[539] John Holland, *World Biblical Commentary: Luke 18:35-24:53* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), p. 1152.

Christ before the interim state in which they find themselves and simply expresses a special proximity to Christ.[540]

The pastor of Elim (B'ham) interpreted the words 'being present with the Lord' to imply that the deceased has gone straight to heaven without an 'intermediate period' as is evident from this exchange:

> LR - What does that mean being present with the Lord?
>
> P – As soon as you have departed from this world you are ushered into heaven. I am aware of the different school of thoughts. Some suggest there is a period of transition for the dead. For me to be absent from the body, like Paul says, is to be present with the Lord. Whatever that means in terms of the timeframe, I believe that when you are not here physically you are there in heaven.[541]

However, this pastor was also asked whether this meant that all Christian believers went to heaven immediately after death as individuals rather than as a part of a collective at the general resurrection? He responded that he was not sure. In contrast, this particular laity participant was surer about her position:

> I am concerned when people say at funerals their loves ones are in heaven and looking down on them. If it was true that as you die, you go straight to heaven you would already have experienced the resurrection. However, Paul declares that when you die you are asleep and waiting for the resurrection.[542]

It is this lay participant's view, rather than the pastor's, that converges with Thistleton's argument that if souls have already entered into the presence of Christ on an individual basis, it contradicts the biblical position that all Christians will be 'gathered together' for the general resurrection between heaven and earth.[543] Thistleton also argues that if souls have already

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[540] Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead,* pp.50-51.
[541] Interview, Pastor of Elim (B'ham).
[542] V16 of NTCOG (B'ham 2) Focus Group, 31 January 2018.
[543] Thistleton, *The Last Things,* p.98.

entered heaven by way of an individual resurrection, the significance of the general resurrection at Christ's return on the 'last day' is greatly diminished. A similar argument is made by Moltmann who suggests that if the dead were ready to rise immediately on death, our bodily solidarity with the earth would be broken, and without 'the new earth, there is no resurrection of the body.'[544] Also, Cullmann concludes that the patristic writers subscribed to the belief that a *general* resurrection of all people on the last day would occur rather than the immediate departure of individuals.[545]

In general, most of the pastors' views in this study appear to converge with Calvin rather than Luther with regards to the intermediate state enabling the dead to experience a type of resurrection in a *conscious* state. However, there appears to be tension between the normative and formal voices which support a form of 'intermediate state' and the espoused voices of the pastors who believe in an 'immediate departure' into heaven after death.

4.4.3 Reconciling 'intermediate state' and 'immediate departure'

Moltmann argues that the concept of time is a modern scientific concept, not an eschatological one. Therefore, the raising of individuals at the hour of their deaths, and the general raising of the dead in Christ on the last day should not be thought of as events which are in contradiction with each other but simultaneous events.[546] Moltmann describes the intermediate period as follows:

[544] Moltmann, *The Coming of God,* pp.103-104.
[545] Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead,* pp.50-51.
[546] Moltmann, *The Coming of God,* pp.138-139.

> It is not empty, like a waiting room. It is filled with the Lordship of Christ over the dead and the living, and by the experience of the Spirit who is the life-giver…Christians know that they are safely hidden in Christ. [547]

According to Thistleton, this almost solves the problem of how the dead believer can be immediately 'with Christ' and yet also enter an intermediate state until the future coming of Christ and the general resurrection.[548] Notably, while an 'observer' (third person perspective) may accept the existence of an 'intermediate state' between death and resurrection, from the perspective of the deceased believer (first-person perspective), this could still be experienced as an immediate departure into heaven. Thus, for Thiselton, one can reconcile the concept of 'immediate departure' and 'intermediate state' in creative tension as they both can be true depending on whether the perspective of the 'participant' or 'observer' is being represented.[549] However, if one makes the distinction between third-person and first-person perspectives it immediately becomes clear that this requires the deceased, from a first-person perspective, to be in a non-conscious state because if they were conscious they would indeed experience an 'intermediate state'. In this empirical data there appears convergence towards a *conscious* state of the soul occurring between death and resurrection from a first-person perspective. This means that reconciling 'intermediate state' and 'immediate departure' within ordinary Pentecostal theology of death still remains problematic.

[547] Moltmann, *The Coming of God,* pp.104-105.
[548] Thiselton, *The Last Things,* p.70.
[549] Thiselton, *The Last Things,* pp.75 -79

4.5 Conclusion

As we have seen there are many gaps and tensions in the espoused voices in relation to the three specific themes which have not all been resolved by the normative and formal theology. For the first theme – the resurrection of the dead - the espoused voices of both the Pentecostal clergy and laity closely aligned with the *normative* voices of their respective denominations as expressed in their statements of belief. This is mainly because Pentecostals rely heavily on the 'biblical doctrine method'. Despite criticism from Stephenson this hermeneutical method adopted by Pentecostals has served a useful purpose by giving weight to biblically revealed doctrine, rather than human reasoning. The Pentecostal churches and denominations in this research have also affirmed the belief in the resurrection of the dead as one of the core tenets of the Christian faith rooted in the ancient creeds that have influenced most Christian churches throughout the ages.

For the second theme – material continuity - most of the clergy and laity in this research believed that at the resurrection, believers would be given a completely new body rather than the physical body being preserved or renewed. However, this rejection of material continuity is in tension with the belief in the rapture which suggests that some aspects of the physical body will be preserved or restored in the resurrection. Significantly, some Pentecostal scholars suggest that there has been a weakening of the level of conviction about the rapture and other aspects of premillennial dispensational eschatology amongst Pentecostals in recent times. In contrast, there is a consensus amongst the Pentecostals in this research that there will be a continuity of the personal identity of the individual at the resurrection. Therefore, for Pentecostals there is not a uniform position as there appears to be both discontinuity and continuity regarding material continuation of the deceased person.

For the third theme – the intermediate state - the rejection of this doctrine by many of the pastors diverges from the view of the patristic writers who subscribed to the belief of a *general* resurrection of all people on the last day, rather than individual resurrections which occur immediately on the death of every individual.[550] Hence, there appears to be a tension between the pastors who subscribe to 'immediate departure' to heaven after death and formal voices which promote an intermediate state. Pentecostals may look to Moltmann to reconcile these tensions around the concept by recognising time as a modern scientific concept, not an eschatological one. Therefore, while 'observers' may accept the existence of an 'intermediate state' between death and resurrection, from the perspective of 'participants', this could still be regarded as an immediate departure into heaven.

In this chapter, normative and formal voices were brought into dialogue with espoused voices in order to help articulate or interpret a Pentecostal ordinary theology of death in relation the three theology of death themes. The next chapter will examine how one more theologies of death theme contributed towards understanding ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death.

[550] Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead,* pp.50-51.

CHAPTER 5

MULTI-VOICES DIALOGUE RELATING TO 'COMMUNITY WITH THE DEAD'

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter there will be an analysis of the data primarily solicited from the 'espoused' voices which are what participants have said about what they believe in relation to the sub-theme of 'community with the dead'. This term, 'community with the dead' was used by Moltmann in his publication *The Coming of God* and refers to the practice of prayer and other forms of communion with people beyond the grave in various Christian traditions.[551] This chapter also explores how Pentecostals understand the degree in which spirits of the dead are perceived and present amongst us.

The first part of this chapter will present key elements of espoused voices articulated in this research in relation to this sub-theme. The espoused voices will then be brought into dialogue with the 'formal' voices which include Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholarship to determine how ordinary theologies of death in relation to the 'community with the dead' can be articulated. Non-Pentecostal formal theologies be are initially drawn from the Roman Catholic and modern Protestant tradition. There is also a significant contribution of African scholarship towards theology relating to 'community with the dead' in the context of African

[551] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.107

traditional religion (ATR). Therefore, this chapter brings African scholarship into dialogue with the espoused voices to examine the continuities and discontinuities with ATR.

5.2 Espoused voices in dialogue with formal and normative voices

In order to solicit espoused voices relating to the theme, community with the dead, the question presented to the clergy and the laity was: 'Do you believe that when someone dies, before the resurrection of the dead, that they can make a connection or appearance with people here on earth?' Examples related to the theme of the 'community with the dead', shared by focus group participants at Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP), include the following:

> V15 - Everyone knows that my husband passed away. Every Wednesday I go up to the cemetery and I talk to him. I know he is not hearing what I am saying but I am still talking.
>
> V16 – I communicate and talk to my grandparents and reminisce, not expecting them to talk back. We all kind of go through that process where we reminisce and talk to them. We may even be in their room or their graveside.
>
> V17 – I remember losing my Aunt some years back now – about 15 to 20 years and I still communicate with her verbally – but I don't think she can hear me because she is resting.[552]

Other examples shared in the focus groups included: talking to their deceased relative indiscriminately at home; taking flowers to the graveside; feeling that their deceased relative one was close to them; and dreaming about their deceased relative.

It was evident that experiences of community with the dead seem to be mainly prevalent amongst the British *Caribbean* participants in this research. One such participant shared:

> I am a Caribbean and after my father's death my mother would often say that 'I dreamt of him' and that he would appear to her in a dream.[553]

[552] COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group, 31 March 2017.
[553] V18 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.

The encounters with the deceased relatives can be auditory as well as visual as this participant explained:

> My mum passed away about 6 years now and I have one son. I remember clearly, he was courting this young lady. I went to bed and in the middle of night I just felt like a presence in the room and I heard my mother's voice calling out his name which caused me to rise out of the bed quickly.[554]

Another participant also shared their experience of dreams of the dead:

> I believe that with my mother she was no longer in this world and her spirit went to the spiritual realm. With my father, he hung around for a little while. The reason why I say that is because after my mother died I never dreamt of her once. When my father died, I dreamt of him a lot and in one of the last dreams I saw him go around to members of the family saying goodbye and I will see you again. It might have been my imagination creating this, but ever since I had that dream, I knew he was no longer in this spiritual realm.[555]

Therefore, amongst British Caribbean participants, some people believed that dreams can reveal hidden information about the spiritual realm that is not accessible by other means. In contrast, there was only one such experience shared by this British African participant from RCCG:

> I had an experience before in a dream when my mother died while I was at university and my father some years later got married. I was in my house lying down and I had a dream and I saw my mum. I said to her what are you doing in this place? She said that I am just going around the house which is beautiful and I loved this place. I then jumped out of my sleep and I knew she was gone but I believe that she was just assuring me that everything was going to be fine with me and that was all. She did not come to me physically, but it was in my subconscious.[556]

Similarly, there were only a few experiences of community with the dead shared by the white participants of an Elim Pentecostal Church in Staffordshire (Elim (Staffs)), a white-led church:

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[554] V19 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[555] V8 of NTCOG (B'ham 2) Focus Group.
[556] V12 of RCCG (2) Focus Group, 1 November 2017.

> V56 – My wives' mother died just over 2 years ago and I took possession of a brass elephant and every time I go fishing and take it with me and set it up in my tent so that I can see it, so my mother-in-law is always with me when I am fishing.
>
> V58 – We put my mother's ashes in a bauble on a Christmas tree.
>
> V59 – I kept my mums blue sequin dress in my wardrobe and everyone time I went close to it, it smelt of my mum but eventually it faded away and I put it in the loft.[557]

Arguably, the above are examples of reminiscing rather than community with the dead. Another participant at Elim (Staffs) did share actual experiences of community with the dead:

> As someone who has become a Christian as an adult my whole perspective of death has changed completely. You realised that Jesus died for us and when you die you die in a certain way. Before I was a Christian, I believed that the dead could come back as ghosts and I believed that there were spirits. Now I believe in God and about how Jesus died for us and that makes a really big difference to how I feel about death.[558]

One of the participants at Elim (Staffs) gave a useful illustration about these types of encounters with the dead:

> When my mum died and I went to clean up her house, I felt like I was doing it for her. I remember sitting and looking at the place where she died, and I remember thinking I must be going mad looking at this. It is like when people leave on a train, people often continue looking where the train has gone. It is also like when the disciples were looking when Jesus went up into the clouds.[559]

The last part of this participant's illustration makes reference to Luke's account of the disciples gazing into heaven when Jesus ascended into the clouds (Acts 1:9-11). Therefore, this participant felt that the bereaved are often reminiscent about their loved ones particularly at the places they last saw them, just as the disciples were fixated at the last point in which they saw Jesus before he ascended. The experiences of the British white participants were distinct from the British Caribbean participants because they related more with the memorialisation of their close relatives rather than actual experiences of communicating or *praying* with the dead.

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[557] Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[558] V60 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[559] V55 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.

Pentecostal scholarship can be brought into dialogue to help to interpret or articulate these experiences in the context of 'Pentecostal spirituality'.

Until recently, Pentecostals did not talk about their 'spirituality' as it was not part of their religious vocabulary. Anderson points out that 'Pentecostal spirituality' has become recognised as a distinctive form of spirituality that can be described through its various activities and rituals. However, it would be inaccurate to call it a *universal* 'Pentecostal spirituality,' because Pentecostalism throughout the world is very diverse. Anderson argues that it is more accurate to say that there are different Pentecostal spiritualities with common features.[560] Anderson defines 'spirituality' as 'that which pertains to and describes the spiritual or religious experience of people and all that is affected by or affects it.'[561] Also, Pentecostal spirituality is the interface between Christianity and other religious worlds, "and this is expressed in liturgies that are primarily oral, narrative, and participatory".[562] Therefore, the above examples of community with the dead or memorialisation in this research can be seen as an expression of Pentecostal spirituality as it interfaces between Christianity and other 'spiritual' experiences.

Prayer is one important aspect of Pentecostal spirituality. According to Warrington, for Pentecostals, prayer is primarily a Trinitarian encounter offered to the Father, Son and Spirit. However, Warrington does not either acknowledge or admonish prayers to the dead in his exploration of Pentecostal theology.[563] In general, there is a lack of critical discussion from

[560] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.17.
[561] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.15.
[562] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.16.
[563] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* pp.214-215.

Western Pentecostal scholars regarding prayers to the dead; therefore, we must engage with a wider Christian traditions.

In terms of the Roman Catholic Church, the cult of Mary and the community of the saints has played a central role throughout its history. The Catholic theologian, Thomas Oden documents that in the early fifth century, the cult of Mary was beginning to emerge in the early Catholic Church and continued during the Middle Ages when Mary was exalted as another mediator between them and God as well as Christ.[564]

The cult of Mary led to the cult of the saints in the Catholic Church. It emerged from the early church that some distinctive deceased 'saints' were holy enough to merit devotion. This concept was codified in the Apostles' Creed which locates the communion of saints in this section:

> I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.[565]

Stephen Wilson explains that the phrase 'communion of the saints' or in Latin, *sanctorum communion*, can be translated in two ways. It can mean sharing the blessings of Christ's death and resurrection as part of his body in the Eucharist. It is by this participation in the life of the triune God that the church as the holy people of God are called saints. It also refers to the martyrs and saints, alive and dead, who together with Christ are his body. In the pre-Constantinian period, martyrdom was a feature of the early church and recognition of genuine martyrs and saints was largely a local matter.[566] During the middle ages the cult of the saints

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[564] Thomas Oden, *The Word of Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989), p.157.
[565] A Rufinus, *The Apostles' Creed: Textus Receptus* (c.400).
[566] Stephen Wilson, *Saints and their cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.2-16.

emerged and together with prayers to Mary continued to grow as an established practice within the Catholic Church. Eventually John Paul II guided the renewal of Marian devotion in the modern Catholic Church in 1974.[567]

Moltmann argues that the community of Christ in the church universal has always been understood historically as a community of the living and the dead. He argues that to acknowledge hope for the resurrection of the dead means preserving community with the dead.[568] He used the example of the practice of the 'All Souls Day' by Catholics and some Protestants when people visited the graves of their deceased loves ones, and their worship took place in the presence of the dead. Moltmann argues that the Eucharist for Catholics, which takes place in the 'communion of the saints', brings a deeper sense of the church's tradition of intercession for the dead, demonstrating that: 'The community of the living and the dead are the praxis of the resurrection hope.'[569]

The Caribbean historian, Dale Bisnauth, points out that some Caribbean islands, such as Haiti and the Dominion Republic, have a strong Catholic tradition which was influenced by the Spanish conquerors from the fifteenth century.[570] However, most Caribbean islands, which included Jamaica, were catechised by the Dutch and British Protestant Reformers who established the first Anglican churches in the seventeenth century.[571] Although there are Catholic churches in most islands of the Caribbean, the Catholic Church never had a strong presence in places like Jamaica as Protestantism, in particular Pentecostalism, became the

[567] The Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, issued 2 Feb. 1974; English trans., *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1974).
[568] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.108.
[569] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.108.
[570] Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean* pp.11-30.
[571] Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, pp.31-55.

dominant religion in the twentieth century. This may explain why the cult of Mary or the Saints is not widely practiced amongst the British Caribbeans.

According to Warrington, Pentecostals have a different concept of 'saints' from the Catholic tradition. Pentecostals apply the term 'saints' in the same manner used by Paul in the New Testament (*hagioi*) to describe believers who are different from unbelievers. Its fundamental meaning recognises that saints are people who have been set apart (Hebrews 6:10) and chosen (Ephesians 1.4, 11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4), and this term comprises Jews and Gentiles (Romans 2. 28-29; Philippians 3.3).[572] It can only be assumed that Warrington's exegesis of the word 'saints' in Paul's teaching only applies to the *living;* however, he was not explicit about this. Nevertheless, what is clear is that for Pentecostals all believers are saints.

Martin Luther rejected the cult of Mary and the saints based on the contention that such practice is not based on divine command. His belief was guided by his Christocentric view of life which expressed itself in the fundamental affirmation of the doctrine of justification of faith alone. Luther also criticised the cult on the basis that it caused people to have greater confidence in the merits of deceased saints than in Christ. However, he advocated that departed saints may be *remembered*, but prayer to the saints should be omitted from liturgical services.[573] Notwithstanding, Lutherans continue to respect and *venerate* the saints when their example on earth is followed and there are some Lutherans who grant prayer to the blessed Mary. Lutherans remain suspicious of invoking deceased saints and contend that it conflicts with the sole mediatorship of Christ and that its practice tends to encourage abuse in the church's devotional

[572] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.135.
[573] Luther preached about eighty sermons on Mary, all based on biblical texts. An exhaustive collection of Luther's statements on Mary has been offered by Walter Tappolet and Albert Ebneter eds., *Das Marienlob der Reformatatoren* (Tubingen: Katzmann, 1962) pp.357-364.

life.[574] According to Warrington, Pentecostals also seek to provide a theology that is Christocentric and affirm the full deity, sovereignty and sinless humanity of Jesus. 'Thus, he is the Mediator par excellence (Hebrews 9:12, 26-28)'. Although not a subject explicitly discussed by Warrington, it follows that praying to the saints conflicts with the sole mediatorship of Christ affirmed by Pentecostals in a similar way to Lutherans.

Liturgical prayers to the dead are also practiced in some Anglican communities and incorporated in the *Common Book of Prayer*.[575] Douglas Davies highlights a study of active members of the Church of England who were asked if they gained some sense of the presence of their dead loved ones when participating in the Eucharist. According to Davies, a liturgy that formally includes prayers for the departed and links the living and the dead in a wider unity of Christians, should invoke such experiences. [576]

Similarly, in this study a few the participants gained some sense of the presence of their loved ones as they shared experiences of communicating with their deceased relatives. However, there was no evidence in the empirical data that any of the British Caribbean participants experienced direct communication with the dead in a manner analogous with the 'communion of the saints' or liturgical prayers as practiced by Catholics and some Protestants. It is significant that although the participants talked to their deceased relative, most of them believed that their deceased relatives were not capable of listening, however, they still felt it was important for them to maintain this connection with them.

[574] Martin Luther, "On Christian Liberty," *Luther's Works,* Vol 31, 1520 (trans by St' Louis Concordia, 1957).
[575] Church of England, *The Common Book of Prayer*.
[576] Davies, *Theology of Death,* p.160.

Not all of the participants agreed with this practice and one of the participants at COGOP (B'ham 1) reminded the group of the 'normative' theology of her church:

> I know that we are talking about communicating with the dead but when we look into the bible it says that of the dead their thoughts and emotions are no more. They are dead. So how then we can say that someone appears to us in a dream? It is possible because that we have these people on our minds? I think it is contrary to what the bible says.[577]

In an interview, this participant's pastor also acknowledged that these experiences are still common amongst his congregation even though counter to the church's 'normative' doctrine. However, I was not able to trace any written sources of COGOP's normative theology to confirm this position.

Most of the pastors in this research challenged the idea that the deceased could be contacted at all. This is reflected in the following exchange with the pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2):

> LR – If they are conscious do you believe that the conscious spirit or soul can be contacted by anyone who is alive on the earth or can the spirit contact anyone here?
>
> P – I don't believe that on the basis that even in the same account about Lazarus, the rich man did ask for permission to return to his family to be able to have conversations with them...but the instruction was that it was not possible as there was a gulf between where they are and where he was now and that will not be crossed.
>
> LR – Have you come across any experiences amongst your congregants of anyone claiming that someone that has deceased has made contact or has attempted to make contact with them in any shape or form.
>
> P – I have not personally but I have come across people who have claimed that they have. These are individuals who have been involved in extra 'spiritual' contacts with the spirit. The bible has a term for that – 'necromancy', where people dabble into medium and witchcraft where they are attempting to make contact with the spirits. The bible frowns upon that as there are biblical passages that suggest that believers should not be doing that.[578]

[577] V20 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[578] Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2).

It is worth examining what some of these biblical passages reveal about the community with the dead. Firstly, the above pastor believed that it is not possible for the living to make contact with the dead based on the account about Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16: 19-31. New Testament scholar, Joel Green, challenges this view in his exegesis of this Lukan passage. He notes that when the rich man asked Abraham whether he could send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his brothers of this place of torment, Abraham simply refuses on the basis that his brothers are not likely to listen. Nothing is said here about it being impossible for Lazarus to actually communicate this message to the rich man's living relatives. [579] John Holland argues that as a parable this passage should not be interpreted literally but serves as an illustration of the resurrection of Jesus and the failure of his resurrection to compel Jewish repentance and acceptance of their messiah.[580] Holland also suggests that in the Jewish tradition, there may be a role for messengers from the death for those who have at death been translated to heaven such as Enoch and Elijah (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).[581]

The pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1) used an example from the Old Testament in his discussion about communicating with the dead:

> He [Samuel] answered him but that is a bit of an obscure text and you wonder whether it is Jewish myth or a reality of what was recorded.[582]

Here he is referring to 1 Samuel 28:3-25 which relates King Saul's quest to know his future through a woman, referred to as the witch of Endor.[583] In his commentary of the account of King Saul and the Witch of Endor, David Tsumura suggests that God permitted the witch to

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[579] Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.609.
[580] John Holland, *World Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), p.826.
[581] Holland, *World Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*, p. 831.
[582] Interview, Pastor of NTGOG (B'ham 1).
[583] David T. Tsumura, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The first book of Samuel* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 619.

call up the spirit of Samuel from the earth even though this was prohibited.[584] The Old Testament scholar, Peter Miscall, observes that the divining powers of the woman are not employed to call up his spirit which suggests that Samuel's appearance happened outside her control or influence.[585] Thus, a power stronger than her powers of necromancy must have been at work in bringing up the spirit of Samuel. Therefore, according to Miscall, the story depicts the futility of conjuring the dead, since this resulted in an announcement which eventually led to the death of Saul.[586] Tsumura concludes that even if this was the actual spirit of Saul, this does not necessarily support the view that God sometimes permits the dead to be contacted through mediums. Rather something unique and unusual occurred through God's power for God's purpose to declare judgement on Saul.[587] Therefore, the principle of this biblical account is that it is possible that God can use unconventional methods for people to experience the power of God, even through communication with the dead.

5.3 Pentecostal Demonology

Although sources of Pentecostal formal or normative theology with regard to community with the dead appear to be scarce, there is considerably more critical discussion relating to the broader theme of 'other spirits' or 'demonology'. According to Warrington, 'demonology' is the doctrine of demons or 'evil spirits'. Pentecostals accept the real and personal existence of the devil whose major role is to 'combat the work of Spirit which is to lead people into truth.'[588] The pastor of NTCOG (Springhill) also attempted to explain why some of his British Caribbean Pentecostal congregants had these experiences of community with the dead:

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[584] Tsumura, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 627.
[585] Peter D. Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Indian University Press, 1986), p, 168.
[586] Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*, p.172.
[587] Tsumura, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, pp. 615-616.
[588] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.293.

> Some of them are not necessarily fixed in their theological understanding. If they are not fixed they can almost have their loved one like spirit guide. They say they are having real experiences. They say that their deceased loved one met them and so on. Now I can't deny their experience, all I can say to them is that it is not congruent to biblical teaching for believers. So, I do say to them they need to be careful that they are not opening a gateway to demonic presences to speak to you.[589]

Many of the other pastors in this research also believed that materialisations of ghosts or ancestors are demons in disguise. This is reflected in the following exchange during an interview with the pastor of a West Bromwich Church, a BMC:

> P – I have questions about what really happens to the soul of the departed and I have those questions because the bible is clear about some things but not clear about other things. There is another dimension of our understanding that we don't seem to explore as believers. Believers are quite happy to believe that if there is a presence of a 'spirit' or a 'familiar' spirit and so I have questions around that. When I look at the scripture about King Saul when he consulted a medium the spirit of Samuel that spoke to him – that a familiar spirit.
>
> LR – Could you explain what a familiar spirit is?
>
> P – When we are born, the adversary or Satan assigns a demon to stay with us until we leave this earth. This spirit monitors us, copies us and creates a duplicate spirit of who we are. So when you die as a believer there is a familiar spirit that knows everything about you and can impersonate you. It is my understanding that familiar spirits are the spirits that people dabble into when you go to mediums or try to communicate with the dead. Grandmas' spirit is not actually grandma – people are actually tapping into the demonic realm. [590]

A lay participant at the Handsworth Church shared this experience:

> Demons can take over the bodies of people who die outside Christ which is why some people see their loved ones after death. One of my of daughters said that she saw her deceased granddad standing at the door of her bedroom with a briefcase and when she rubbed her eyes he was gone.[591]

[589] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1).
[590] Interview, Pastor of West Bromwich Church.
[591] V12 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.

These examples of community with the dead suggest that there exists within the Pentecostal community a cosmology that is spiritual in essence which is comprised of a world of good and evil spirits.

There is a substantial amount of Pentecostal scholarship around the theme of 'evil spirits' in relation to 'demonology'. For William Kay, most classical Pentecostal denominations focused their discussion of the role of demons on pastoral care and make a distinction between 'demonic oppression' – being troubled by a demon from the outside of a person, and 'demonic possession' – being troubled by a demon from within.[592] Offering an Assemblies of God perspective on demonology, Collins proposes that demons are engaged in oppressing believers and causing obsessive negative behaviour. [593] Thus, Pentecostals acknowledge the existence of spirits of an evil nature and have developed a comprehensive demonology in this respect. For this reason, observers have often equated all other spirits, including deceased spirits in terms of the demonic representations.[594] Similarly, in this research some pastors equated the experiences of the dead by their congregants with demonic representations.

Vondey acknowledges that Pentecostals confront demonic influences through divine healing where the power of the Holy Spirit is invoked against these principalities and powers as a form of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12).[595] Gregory Boyd articulates 'spiritual warfare' by assigning categories of demons which include 'territorial' (assigned to regions, nations and groups), 'institutional' spirits (assigned to governments, schools and churches) and

[592] Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain,* p.135.
[593] W.D. Collins, "An Assemblies of God Perspective on Demonology, Part 1," *Paraclete* Vol 27.4 (2003), pp.23-30 (27).
[594] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.296.
[595] Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology,* p.118 & 121.

'instrumental' spirits (assigned to instruments, rituals and practices). The next chapter will examine how some death rituals are also regarded as being influenced by demonic spirits.

Warrington points out that the lack of biblical support for much that has been written about demonology often makes this topic subjective thereby leaving a trail of speculation and confusion for the readers. [596] Similarly, Hollenweger describes demonology as 'an unsolved problem in Pentecostal belief and practice' due to its speculation and confusion.[597] Janet Warren argues that Pentecostal demonology, and the prevalence of warfare imagery, often result in an overly dualistic worldview and demonization of complex physical, psychological and social structures.[598] Therefore, it is proposed that Pentecostal demonology, in the context of death, need to be clarified to help guard against inappropriate beliefs and practices when the bereaved may be at their most vulnerable. Notwithstanding, demonology provides a useful context for understanding how Pentecostals in this research view and relate to spirits of the dead.

5.4 Espoused voices in dialogue with African American and African Scholarship

This section brings scholarship on African Traditional Religions (ATR) into dialogue with the beliefs and practices of African and Caribbean Pentecostals in this research. Before doing so we need to explore how the religions of the African diaspora were affected by the Atlantic slave trade in North America.

[596] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.296.
[597] Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, p.626.
[598] Janet Warren, "Spiritual Warfare: A Deed Metaphor?" *JPT* (2012), p.278.

The African American historian, Estrelda Alexander, highlights that the slave trade and colonialism contributed to an African diaspora that has scattered Africans to Europe, Americas and elsewhere otherwise known as the 'New World'. Most Caribbeans would trace their heritage to West African ethnic groups such as the Yoruba in Nigeria and Akan in Ghana. Therefore, there was significant cultural diversity and variety of religious worldviews. The disparate cultures that informed traditional African spirituality found their way into the worship of the slaves and in black religious life. This included the universal belief in a supreme being, a pervasive sense of the reality of the spirit world, blurring of lines between the sacred and the profane and reverence for ancestors and their symbolic communal presence.[599]

Alexander also points out that the Africans who came to the New World as slaves retained much of their African spiritual sensitivities. In fact, for many of the slaves who practiced ATR prior to arriving on plantations in the Americas, Christianity harmonised with their existing spirituality because it was fastened to a set of theological beliefs and practices that already fitted their existing presuppositions. Even as slaves in North America, many Africans still believed in a supreme being who reigned over a spirit world that was able to assist them and continued to have reverence for ancestors.[600]

The African American scholar, Henry Mitchell, provides further insight into evidence of the survival of African culture amongst enslaved Africans in North America in the form of worship. This included hand clapping and feet patting, call-and response, spontaneous improvisation and 'motor inventory' dance movements.[601] Such worship practices owed much to the African tradition in which spirituals were sung to accompany ritual dance, perceived as

[599] Alexander, *Black Fire*, pp.29-31.
[600] Alexander, *Black Fire*, pp.36-37.
[601] Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, p.4.

a means of communicating with God.[602] According to Ann Pinn, from the commencement of the Atlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century, the Christian lifestyle, as developed by enslaved Africans and their descendants, contained a code of ethics and morality that shaped personal conduct and communal interaction.[603]

Alexander points out that even when Pentecostalism dawned in the early twentieth century, African American and Caribbean people retained an appreciation for the pervasiveness of the spiritual realities that surrounded them. For them religion was not just something practiced in church on a Sunday but the element that sustained their everyday life.[604] In discussing African retention within Pentecostalism, Stephen Land argues that not just black Pentecostals but also many other ethnic groups in the wider Pentecostal movement were influenced by African spirituality through the common root in the experience of the Azusa Street revival.[605] Also, James Tinney saw the persistence of song, dance, percussion and glossolalia in Pentecostal worship as representing African spirituality.[606] Hollenweger also agrees that Pentecostalism is based on its 'black roots,' mediated through its African American founders at the Azusa Street revival.[607] Hollenweger argues that the same orality that is foundational to African culture is a central characteristic of Pentecostal spirituality that sparked the movement's initial growth.[608] This influence spread from North America to the Caribbean and the rest of the world, including Britain. In his recent book, *Spirit-filled World*, Allan Anderson examined continuities and discontinuities between ATR and Pentecostalism within churches in a South African township. He explores how South African Pentecostalism is influenced by the concept of ancestors'

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[602] Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, p.7.
[603] Ann H. Pinn, & Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction to Black Church History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), p.14.
[604] Alexander, *Black Fire,* p.44.
[605] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p.47
[606] James S. Tinney, "The Blackness of Pentecostalism," *Spirit* Vol 3. 2 (1979), p.27.
[607] Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, p.269-71.
[608] Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism,* p.23.

veneration and various types of spirits.[609] Considering the continuing influence of traditional religious beliefs on African and Caribbean Pentecostalism, as discussed in these studies, I will now explore how experiences of 'community with the dead' by British Caribbean and African Pentecostals in this research might be influenced by the concepts of ancestors, demons and other spirits.

RCCG is the only denomination amongst the research sample that included a statement about demonology on their website as follows:

> We believe that there is a devil who seeks the downfall of every man. He brought sickness, sin and death into the world (Gen. 3:1-16). He seeks the destruction of those who exercise their faith in the Lord Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11; James 4:7; I Peter 5:8). The devil has several unclean spirits over whom he governs (Matt. 12:24).[610]

This statement affirms that RCCG Pentecostals believe in the existence of Satan and demonic spirits which they have developed into a normative doctrine. Many varied reasons have been offered by the Ghanaian theologian Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu for the presence of demons within Ghanaian Pentecostal cosmology which equally applies to all West African Pentecostal cosmology. These includes depression, negative thoughts and ancestral spirits which are prevalent in Ghanaian communities.[611] The African biblical scholar, Hans Moscicke, rejects a 'demonic' centred theology for the African church and argues that Africans should not impose western suppositions concerning 'the demonic' onto traditional African beliefs about the spirit world. He objects on the basis that 'the demonic' has come to acquire a predominantly negative

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[609] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World*, pp.96-102.
[610] RCCG, Statement of beliefs, *http://rccg.org/who-we-are/our-beliefs/*, Accessed on 7 May 2019.
[611] J.K Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mission to 'Set the Captives Free': Healing, Deliverance and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *IRM* Vol 93.370/371 (July-Oct. 2004), pp.389-406 (396).

connotation in western settings, while not all spirit-beings are understood as evil entities within African and African Pentecostal cosmology.

Bringing espoused voices into the conversation, this RCCG participant shared their experiences of 'community with the dead':

> The dead have some spiritual way of appearing to their relatives before they even know that the person has died. The departed soul usually appears to these people, a couple of hours later, or the following day after the person has died. When we look at the bible, when Jesus Christ died, he showed himself to a number of people before he ascended into heaven. That means that when we die, we continue to live somehow for an interim period.[612]

Therefore, this participant believed that dead spirits can appear to relatives immediately after person has died. Another participant from RCCG shared this view:

> At times there are situations that involve Christians who have experiences of deceased souls appearing to them in a dream. I think at times it is an opportunity for the person to get certain information that they would have never received from somebody else.[613]

This participant went on to share the experience of his mother communicating with him in a dream while at university. According to Asamoah-Gyadu, the understanding of the spirit world tends to be more pervasive among African churches than in other religious or cultural contexts. In this research, the British Caribbean Pentecostals were also expressive about the spirit world. As Alexander pointed out, most Caribbeans originated from West Africa through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Therefore, in terms of bringing further formal voices into dialogue, African scholarship, particularly from a West African perspective, may help to clarify or interpret these practices.

[612] V13 of RCCG (2) Focus Group.
[613] V12 of RCCG (2) Focus Group.

John Mbiti (1931-2019) is considered the father of modern African theology and although of Kenyan origin has made much contribution towards the study of West African traditional religions. He argues that for traditional African people the spirit of the living dead is embodied in this cosmic unity and the deceased is believed to be living in the ontology of the invisible intangible beings. Consequently, Africans do not conceive life and death as two separate phases. Instead, an African worldview understands death as an integrated and continuous developmental life process.[614] Mbiti also subdivides spiritual beings into three hierarchical categories: divinities, spirits, and the living-dead.[615] He explains that the 'living-dead' are ancestors comprising of spirits of humans, who have died but are actively remembered as members of the community. Mbiti makes a clear distinction between 'elders' (living and dead) and 'ancestral' spirits in African traditional thought.[616]

In most examples shared by the participants, they tended to experience apparitions of their deceased mother or grandmother.[617] In fact, the experiences of the British Caribbean participants were distinctly matriarchal as they were mainly shared by women. In contrast, according to Mbiti, ATR is distinctly patriarchal in West Africa and dreams of deceased loved ones are manifestations of 'the living dead' who are normally male 'elders.[618]

Mbiti also points out that *dreams* and *visions* of deceased relatives are considered manifestations of 'the living dead', whom the living can encounter and communicate with. [619] Dreams also appear to be a common way in which British Caribbean participants in this research experience community with the dead. An example of this, referred to earlier in the

[614] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, pp.85.
[615] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p.75.
[616] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, pp.83, 85.
[617] V13 of NTCOG (B'ham 2) Focus Group.
[618] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p.8.
[619] John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions* (London: Heninemann, 1986), p.119.

chapter, concerns a member at COGOP (B'ham 1) who heard her mother's voice while she was sleeping. She believed that she was being warned about her son's partner in the dream.[620] This was the only example from the research where the spirit of the dead is claimed to be giving instructions, a practice that commonly occurs in ATR.

Like Mbiti, the Nigerian scholar, Ogbu Kalu, suggests that spiritual forces abound within African cultures with 'mysterious power that permeates all areas of life.'[621] He has sought to compartmentalise African cosmology and points out that Africans perceive space in three dimensions: the sky, the earth and the ancestral or spirit world which are bound together and the visible and the invisible interweave.[622]

Another leading Nigerian theologian, Bolaji Idowu, builds on Mbiti's and Kalu's categorisations of spirits by highlighting that the Yoruba have nearly one thousand and seven hundred divinities (the largest pantheon in Africa).[623] For Idowu, divinities and ancestors are associated with families and communities, but 'spirits are not as clearly defined.'[624] Although the British Caribbeans in this research have not displayed such a developed cosmology as described by Kalu and Idowu they do present a worldview where the natural world and the realm of the dead sometimes interweave. There is recognition of some form of categorisation of dead spirits in this exchange with a participant from the Handsworth Church, a British Caribbean majority church:

> V8 – I believe that the body is there [in the grave] but the spirit goes back to God and is asleep at this resting place. But I question how the spirit can go back to God if in the

[620] V19 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[621] O. Kalu, African Pentecostalism. An Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), p.3.
[622] Ogbu Kalu "Preserving a Worldview," *Pneuma* Vol 24.2 (Fall, 2002), pp.116-117.
[623] Bolaji E. Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1973), p.76.
[624] Idowu, *God in Yoruba Belief*, pp.174-176.

> bible it says that on the last day the dead in Christ would be caught up to meet the Lord. If you die out of Christ, I believe that you have got these 'wandering spirits'.
>
> LR – what are 'wandering spirits'?
>
> V8 - It's where the person is not at rest [when they die] especially if they died in a 'hot' state – which means that they suddenly died without notice.[625]

Another participant also acknowledged the existence of 'wandering spirits':

> When it comes to other spirits, I always hear that when people died out of God and Christ their spirit wander as they do not have a resting place… Sometimes people would say: "Oh I just seen Miss Mary down the road, but it could not be Mary because she is dead. [626]

Idowu identifies 'wandering spirits' in Yoruba traditional religious beliefs as 'ghost-spirits,' or aimless wandering spirits 'born-to-die'. He explains that 'wandering spirits' refers to the belief that the spirits of deceased relatives may linger around the home after their death either because they have not yet found their resting place as a result from not dying peacefully.[627] This is similar to participant V8's description of someone dying in a 'hot' state if they died suddenly.

With regard to the origin of divinities, Mbiti argues that in ATR, divinities were created by the Supreme Being and are under his authority in the order of all things.[628] According to Idowu, the belief in a Supreme Being is fundamental in African societies. He describes the Supreme Being as the 'living eternal Being who is the creator and source of all living and whose life existed from the dateless past'.[629] Attributes of the Supreme Being in ATR are similar to those projected in the Pentecostal understanding of the character of God in the Bible such as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, benevolence, divinity, and creator. Unlike in certain

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[625] V8 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[626] V10 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[627] Idowu, *God in Yoruba Belief*, pp.174-176.
[628] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p.16.
[629] Idowu, *Oludumare*, p.38-47.

aspects of ATR, for British Caribbean Pentecostals experiences of community with the dead are not integrated within their Christian beliefs or practices.

The scholar of Yoruba traditional religion, Simeon Abiodun, adds two more categories of the dead: those who are still within memory or the departed of up to five generations which he also calls the 'living dead', and those who are not in the memory of living, 'the ancestors'. For Abiodun, the 'living dead' have a continuation of their personality and are still actively remembered as members of the community. However, 'ancestors' are not limited to the immediate family but can include those who have significantly contributed to the entire community irrespective of how long ago they died. [630] Mbiti identifies these as *generalised* ancestral spirits, rather than the recent dead who are regarded as being important for the well-being of life. [631] The experiences of community with the dead in this research tended to be with a close relative of the *recently* dead rather than with *generalised* ancestral spirits as described by Mbiti. A typical example of how British Caribbean participants in this research engage with their deceased relatives is as follows:

> My mum told me a story when I was quite young. I was in my Nan's house and my Nan saw me talking to someone who wasn't there. My Nan asked me who are you talking to and I described the man who appeared to me. My mum identified that this was my granddad from Trinidad who died before I was born.[632]

This is the only example of a British Caribbean participant experiencing community with a dead relative not known to them personally but the granddad was still in the recent memory of her mother.

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[630] Abiodun points out that this distinction does not apply to all Africans. Simeon Abiodun, "The Cult of Ancestors in African Traditional Religion," *An Encyclopaedia of The Arts*, Vol. 10.1 (2006): pp.26-31 (26).
[631] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p.75.
[632] V21 of NTGOG (Black Country) Focus Group, 26 February 2018.

According to Wande Abimbola, one of the common African traditional religious belief systems is 'Ifa' which is a literary and divination system found amongst the Yoruba in many parts of West Africa, including Nigeria, Benin, and Togo. In indigenous Yoruba culture, Ifa has governed almost every aspect of Yoruba life from the birth of a child through to his or her childhood days to old age and finally death.[633] In contrast, there is no suggestion in my research that dead spirits govern almost every aspect of the life of British Caribbeans but some participants have suggested that dead spirits do have some ongoing involvement in the life of bereaved relatives. Furthermore, participants were less inclined to articulate a cosmology as a corporate experience but focused much more on their personal experiences or that of their families.

In Ghana, the largest ethnic group known as the 'Akans' also have an intricate cosmology. Kofi Busia's work captures a wide range of Akan traditional religious and cultural beliefs. Busia asserts that:

> To the Ashanti the universe is full of spirits, however, they fall into two main categories – benevolent and malevolent spirits. There is a great benevolent Spirit, the Supreme Being called *Onyankopong*, the creator and who manifests his power through a pantheon of spirits. The Supreme Being is the *odomankoma*, the supplier of grace, who gives daily life, protection and wellbeing to his people.[634]

In addition, for Akans, God is the true father who is not only the father to humans but also a father to the lesser deities called *abosoms.* These spirits are sometimes referred to as children, messengers or agents of God and they have the power to bless and bring healing.

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[633] Wande Abimbolo, "West African Cosmological System" in Thomas D. Blakely *et al* (eds.) *Religion in Africa,* (Portsmouth: James Curry Ltd, 1994), pp.101-102.
[634] Kofi Abrefa Busia, "The Ashanti" *in African Worlds,* by Daryll Forde, (ed.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p.190.

Birgit Meyer explains that Akans use the term *obonsam* to refer to evil acts and evil persons. *Obonsam* is a spirit which manifests itself through witchcraft with the intention of causing misfortunes, failure, sicknesses and even death.[635] The most common category of evil is *bayie* which is a form of witchcraft. For Debrunner, 'the specific concept of witchcraft is the idea of some supernatural power of which man can also be possessed and which is used exclusively for antisocial purposes.'[636] Bediako makes the point that for Akans the fear of malevolent spirits meant that help was needed to either avoid its dire consequences or overcome its powers.[637]

The British Caribbean participants in this research also seem to regard deceased spirits as both malevolent and benevolent. For those participants who found comfort in engaging with the spirits of their deceased relatives on a regular basis, these spirits would be regarded as benevolent. For example, for the participant described earlier in this chapter who visited her husband's grave each week, it was a way in which she could maintain a meaningful connection with her deceased husband.[638] However, for other participants who expressed how uncomfortable they felt about the spirits of their relatives manifesting in their dreams or otherwise, they are treated as malevolent.

Abiodun points out that in ATR some ancestors also have shrines where sacrifices and prayers are offered to them. Among the Igbo it is called *Igbo Igbae* and there are priests and priestesses attached to the shrines.[639] A few of the participants in my research shared that they would go

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[635] Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.77.
[636] Hans W. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and its Effects on the Akan Tribes* (Accra: Presbyterian Bok Depot Ltd, 1961), p.88.
[637] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: Renewal of a non-western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p.106.
[638] V15 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[639] Abiodun, "The Cult of Ancestors in African Traditional Religion," p.27-28.

to the cemetery to the grave side and 'talk' to their deceased relatives. Other participants have added that they would often lay flowers at the headstone especially on the deceased birthday or other special occasions. The grave side of a relative in this context could be regarded as a type of shrine, similar the Igbo. This picture is more pronounced with the rite of 'flower tributes' which is practiced at the burial of the deceased amongst British Caribbeans which is discussed in more detail in chapter 7. However, unlike Igbo traditional religious practitioners, amongst British Caribbean's no sacrifices are offered to the deceased and no permanent 'priests' are attached to the grave side.

In terms of ancestral *worship* Abiodun argues that among the Yoruba, the word worship '*bo'* is the same word used both for the worship of God and the ancestors. Therefore, worship can be used as an all-embracing term which comprises of the act of submission including bowing, salutation, prayers and libations. Mbiti explains that the role of ancestors must be understood in the light of the high respect accorded to elders in many patriarchal African communities which is why many deceased elders are 'worshipped'. However, not every deceased person is worshipped; only those whose morally exemplary lives have significantly contributed to the entire community's survival are given honour.[640]

According to Ephraim-Donkor, 'the ancestors, like the Supreme Being, are immortal and bestowed with omniscience and ubiquity,' meaning that ancestors are indeed worshipped as gods. However, he acknowledges that the high status of ancestors does not make them comparable to the Supreme Being.[641] Such descriptions have led African scholars such as Mbiti and Onyinah to conclude that ancestors are indeed *worshipped.* Writing from a

[640] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, pp.83, 85.
[641] Anthony Ephraim-Donkor, *African Personality and Spirituality: The Role of Abosom and Human Essence* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), p.139.

Pentecostal perspective, Onyinah argues that there is a link between the gods and ancestors, and he regards any worship of gods as comparable to worship of ancestors.[642]

Abiodun disagrees with Mbiti and Onyinah and argues that Africans *venerate* their ancestors rather than worship them as Christians worship God.[643] In a similar way to Abiodun, Mike Ushe agrees makes a distinction between worship, which is reserved for the Supreme Being, and veneration, which is reserved for ancestors. This is because the relationship that the living has with their ancestors is so important that they act as channels of communication between the Supreme Being, divinities and human beings. Also, to say that Africans worship the ancestors is to deny them the opportunity of giving the respect and honour to their departed in accordance with their cultural traditions.[644]

This research has shown that some form of African ancestral worship appears to have been retained amongst the British Caribbeans. However, following Abiodun and Ushe, there is a clear distinction between worship which is reserved for their Christian God and the *veneration* of their deceased relatives.

5.5 Pentecostal response to ATR

With regard to the Pentecostal responses to ATR, Anderson argues that generalisations about the beliefs and attitudes of African Pentecostal churches must not give the impression of finality and conclusiveness, especially when dealing with such a dynamic and constantly changing church environment. Anderson observes that South African churches, which include

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[642] Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, p.46-47.
[643] Abiodun, "The Cult of Ancestors in African Traditional Religion," p.29.
[644] Mike Ushe, "God, Divinities and Ancestors in African Religious Thought" in *An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol 3.4, June 2017, pp.154 – 178 (175).

Pentecostal and other Christian traditions, have responded to the reality of the ancestor cult in three contrasting ways.[645] The first response is one of *indifference,* 'The spirit world does not exist and can safely be ignored'. Anderson suggests that this response is a close reflection of western Christianity.[646] In this research there does appear to be an indifference expressed by most of the lay participants towards those British Caribbeans 'communicating with the dead'. The prevailing response was that 'the dead can't hear'.[647]

The second response highlighted by Anderson was the *accommodation* and continuity view, mainly held by some members of neo-Pentecostal churches. In South Africa the spirit world is accommodated in the rituals of the church in varying degrees from total acceptance of the pre-Christian views to limited and selected appropriation of some of these rituals.[648] The Nigerian Pentecostal scholar, Nimi Wariboko, leans towards accommodation and continuity as a response to the ancestor cult. He describes the ability of Nigerian Pentecostals to be simultaneously 'inside and outside African traditional religions', representing "both continuity and rupture in the same Nigerian religious landscape.[649] Similarly, the African theologian Kwame Bediako encourages the development of a theology of 'ancestors' in an African context which can accommodate Scripture.[650] Ambrose Moyo takes this a step further by arguing that Christ can be portrayed as an ancestor, because he stands as the intermediary between God and humanity. Christ is seen then as a universal answer for the Jews, Gentiles and Africans and his blood makes all persons blood relatives.[651] Great persons, such as chiefs, kings and politicians,

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[645] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World*, pp.96-102, This work is based on his original paper, "African Pentecostalism and the Ancestors", paper read at the annual Conference of the Southern African Missiological Society, January 1993, and published in Missionalia Vol 21.1 (April 1993) pp.26-39 (31-33).
[646] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World*, p.96.
[647] V15 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[648] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World*, pp.96-97
[649] Nimi Wariboko, *Nigerian Pentecostalism* (University of Rochester Press, 2014), p.5 & 26.
[650] Kwame Bediako, "The Significance of Modern African Christianity: A Manifesto," *Studies in World Christianity* (1995) Vol 1.1, p.51-67.
[651] Ambrose Moyo, *Zimbabwe: The Risk of Incarnation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), p.43.

receive elaborate and costly funerals because they are transformed to the status of an ancestor who should not be forgotten.[652] Arguably, members of the black Pentecostal community also have elaborate and costly funerals because the deceased could be seen as being transformed to the status of an 'ancestor'. This will be explored further in chapter 7.

The third and most common response highlighted by Anderson is one of c*onfrontation* and discontinuity. His research points to the fact that for most members of these churches the ancestor cult is rejected. The 'ancestors', they believe, are not ancestors at all, but are demon spirits which need to be confronted and exorcised for they will only lead to further misery and bondage. Furthermore, it is believed that 'ancestors' disguised as demons should have no power over Christians, because Christians have the greater power of the Holy Spirit.[653] In this research the most common response amongst the *clergy* was that of confrontation as deceased spirits are regarded as demons in disguise. In contrast, the prevailing response amongst the *laity* in the focus groups was that of indifference or accommodation in varying degrees. Notwithstanding, there was not much evidence that pastors imposed strict restrictions on these experiences and exorcisms did not appear to be carried out frequently.[654]

There appears to be a firmer stance of confrontation adopted by the West African RCCG pastors where experiences of 'community with the dead' appear to be scarce in comparison with the British Caribbean Pentecostal churches. Anderson's research in South Africa may provide an explanation. In his study, he discovered that members of urban Pentecostal mission churches and independent churches (constituting 9% of the total population) in South Africa

[652] Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, p.309.
[653] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World*, pp.102-110.
[654] A comprehensive study about exorcisms by Pentecostals which is outside the scope of this research would be required.

were generally unanimous in their rejection of the ancestor cult and all the rituals associated with it. He explains this rejection as an indication of a radical break with what they regard as 'pagan' practices and Pentecostals insist that a person who is 'saved' should not be associated with these ancestral rituals. Many South African Pentecostals also identified ancestors as demonic and believed that they were in fact evil spirits.[655]

Of course, it is important not to make generalisations, as South African Pentecostals are not the same as West African Pentecostals. However, there are some patterns of belief that are common throughout Africa and in this context, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that RCCG Pentecostals may well reject the ancestor cult as an indication of a radical break with 'pagan' traditional religious practices in West Africa. It is possible that because most African Pentecostals believe that their doctrines and practices are 'biblical', they resist the idea that there can be any pre-Christian religious ideas in their beliefs and practices.

5.6 Pentecostal pneumatology

As we have seen there is great diversity and complexity regarding the spirit world in ATR. In contrast, experiences of 'community with the dead' shared by the participants in this research are limited and there is also a lack of critical discussion by Pentecostal scholars. The Ghanaian Pentecostal theologian Opoku Onyinah suggests that one way of framing the discussion is to find positive categories for the 'other spirits' which requires a nuanced understanding of the biblical conception of the spiritual realm.[656] The most significant 'spirit' amongst British

[655] Anderson, "African Pentecostalism and the Ancestors," p.37.
[656] Opoku, Onyinah, "Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supp*. Vol 34 (2012).

African and Caribbean Pentecostals is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this leads us to a discussion about ATR within a pneumatological framework.

Harvey Kwiyani points out that while the Holy Spirit features heavily in the African Pentecostal worldview, there is little scholarly literature on the African Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit partly because of the oral nature of African Pentecostal theology.[657] However, Chigor Chike counter's this trend in his book, *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity.*[658] He highlights that where ATR is practiced, Africans have the sense that ancestors are involved in their daily lives. African Pentecostals have a way of seeing the world which was spiritual in essence and is connected to the way they relate to the Holy Spirit.[659]

In a study of African Pentecostalism and the 'Ancestor Cult', Anderson tries to interpret ATR in a pneumatological context through undertaking a qualitative survey. In his study he concludes that most of his interviewees had a clear understanding of the Holy Spirit and were opposed to the practice of the ancestor cult by Christians. Anderson explains:

> The fact that the Holy Spirit has taken over some of the functions of the ancestor does not mean that the Holy Spirit has thereby become an ancestor. It means rather that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has become relevant in this very important African context, in that the Spirit has become the Counsellor and Guide as portrayed in Scriptures.[660]

In this study, although there were many accounts shared by participants who had experienced dreams of someone bringing them knowledge or information they may not otherwise have

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[657] Harvy Kwiyani, "Pneumatology, Mission and African Christianity in the West", in Israel Olofinjana (ed.), *African voices: Towards African British Theologies* (Cumbria: Langham Partnership), p.125.
[658] Chigor Chike, *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity: An Empirical Study* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016).
[659] Chike, *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*, p.80.
[660] Allan Anderson, "African Pentecostalism and the Ancestor Cult: Confrontation and Compromise," *Missionalia* Vol 21.1, April 1993, p.38.

known, there was no evidence that their experiences of the dead were connected to the way they relate to the Holy Spirit.

Elsewhere Anderson asks the question of whether Pentecostalism is the first truly indigenous expression of the Christian experience of the Spirit in the African context. Anderson argues that Pentecostal expressions and manifestations are actually conduits towards a viable African Christianity. Pentecostalism has advocated a practical belief in the immanence of God by the Holy Spirit which accords much more closely with the holism of the African worldview. The difference between the two is the Pentecostal focus on the divine empowerment by the Holy Spirit in contrast to the impersonal 'life-force' of African religions. These traditional African religions are often rejected because of their 'heathen' practices and beliefs. However, Anderson advocates that we consider these traditions to be fertile ground that prepare the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit to Africa.[661] Anderson explores how some AICs understand the Holy Spirit to fulfil the role of indigenous spiritual practice. In regard to the role of the ancestors, he states: 'In the practices of the Spirit churches, whether the functions of the ancestors have been taken over by the Spirit cannot be proved conclusively.'[662] Anderson also points out that Pentecostals interpret ideas of the Spirit in light of both a holistic world and the Bible.[663]

Amos Yong develops a theology of religions by arguing for Pentecostals to acknowledge how the Spirit is universally present and active in the other religions. He sets forth a series of 'axioms' for the work of the Holy Spirit which include that God is *universally* present and active in the Spirit in the world, God's Spirit is the life-breath of the *imago Dei* in every human

[661] Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (Johannesburg: Unisa Press, 1991).
[662] Allan Anderson, "African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology," *Word & World* Vol 23.2 (2003), pp.178-186.
[663] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.10.

being and the presupposition of all human relationships and communities and in other religions.[664] In one of his subsequent publications, *The Spirit poured out on all flesh,* Yong argues for a respectful orientation to folk religions as it recognises the possibility that God in this sense sustains these religions for divine purposes. Furthermore, the Spirit's presence and activity in the folk religions means that what is historically regarded as non-Christian by Pentecostals are redeemable for the glory of God.[665]

Kärkkäinen agrees with Yong by pointing out that African traditional religionists believe the existence of the universal 'spirit' present throughout every sphere of God's creation, who may be encountered multi-contextually in culturally diverse ways.[666] According to Kärkkäinen, for several millennia the Spirit has led African peoples to a sense of holy mystery which mirrors that of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit may not only lead people into a salvific experience but also energises and empowers people toward a fuller and deeper sense of our sacred humanity. He also argues for the need to develop criteria for discerning demonic spirits and to identify the work of God's divine Spirit vis-à-vis other spirits.[667]

Simon Chan challenges Yong's and Kärkkäinen's implicit belief in a universal or *common* Spirit in the church and in the world. He argues that the role of the church is to discern the presence of the Spirit in the structures of the world and cooperate with the Spirit in advancing the kingdom of God in these structures.[668]

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[664] Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) referenced in his later publication *Discerning the Spirt(s),* p.98.
[665] Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), p.246.
[666] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "How to Speak of the Spirit among religions" in Michael Welker (ed.), *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism,* (Cambridge Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), p.67.
[667] Kärkkäinen, "How to Speak of the Spirit among religions," p.68.
[668] Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition,* p.115.

5.7 Conclusion

Yong and other Pentecostal scholars take a pneumatological approach to the interreligious encounter and emphasise that Pentecostals need a theology of religions on the basis of the Pentecostal quest for theological identity and truth. This involves developing a Pentecostal theology of the Holy Spirit to explore the Spirit's presence in culturally diverse ways. A broader investigation into the cosmology of the laity together with a rigorous historical-scientific approach to the biblical narratives regarding the spiritual realm could provide theologians with valuable resources for articulating ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death.

However, there remains a tension between the normative theology of the churches in this study and the ordinary theology of the laity who appear to have retained some elements of African ancestral worship. Even though there is no evidence of continuation of specific aspects of Yoruba or Akan religious practices amongst the British Caribbeans and Africans in this research, there do appear to be some continuities between their Pentecostal worldview and African traditional cosmology. However, it is possible that the work of the Holy Spirit brings discontinuity to a continuous spirit world often without Pentecostals realising it. Therefore, it is problematic that church authorities and leaders have by and large confronted and diabolised experiences of community with the dead despite being commonly practiced within the Pentecostal communities. The question of how Pentecostals can identify, understand and discern between the 'other spirits' when confronted with this broad spectrum of beliefs as advocated by Yong is beyond the scope of this research.

In these last two chapters, normative and formal voices were brought into dialogue with espoused voices in order to help articulate or interpret a Pentecostal ordinary theology of death

in relation to *beliefs*. The next two chapters will examine how ritual *practice* (focusing on 'operant voices') contributes towards understanding ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death.

CHAPTER 6

MULTI-VOICES DIALOGUE RELATING TO PRE-FUNERAL RITUALS

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will be analysing data elicited primarily from the 'operant' and 'espoused' voices. Operant voices in this study represent what we can learn about God from studying what clergy and laity do when it comes to death ritual *practices* and what they do following a person's death. The empirical data has been gathered from the several funeral events I attended and observed. The 'espoused' voices in this study are what clergy and laity articulate about the death rituals they carry out as expressed through the interviews and focus groups. The operant and espoused voices are both treated as sources of 'ordinary' theologies as in the previous chapters.

One of the aims of this chapter is to determine to what extent ordinary Pentecostal death rituals converge or diverge with normative and formal Pentecostal theologies of death. Where sources of Pentecostal scholarship are limited, 'formal' theologies from wider Christian traditions are also brought into dialogue in order to help to analyse the empirical data and articulate an ordinary Pentecostal theology. The death and funeral rituals discussed in chapters 6 and 7 by no means covers all rituals practiced by Pentecostals in Britain in relation to death, rather, this thesis is an attempt to analyse empirical data in relation to the key rituals.

The 'thematic analysis' approach adopted in the previous chapters will also be utilised in this chapter.[669] In doing so the natural 'meaning units' of the empirical data are divided into two main themes – pre-funeral rituals, and funeral service rituals and beyond. This chapter will focus on pre-funeral rituals and is divided into the following sub-themes: rituals at the point of death; funeral planning; the ritual of 'nine nights'; and superstitions. However, this chapter will begin with an exploration of the meaning of 'rituals.'

6.2 Defining death rituals and rites

The British cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, defined rituals as:

> Prescribed formal behaviour occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical (or non-empirical) beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects.[670]

Therefore, rituals can be described as any formal behaviour prescribed by society, but it also carries a more specific meaning related to people's beliefs. The word 'rites' are defined as specific phases of these ritual events. According to Ronald Grime, a religious rite can be understood as any act or set of actions or activities widely recognised, sanctioned and handed down by the faith community.[671] The Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1908 wrote, 'The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another.'[672] He termed these transitions 'rites of passage', and they provide a useful framework for understanding death rituals in Pentecostal communities. These rites are considered by van Gennep in three categories: the passage of *status*, the passage of *time* and the passage of

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669 Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, p.45.
670 V. W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Cornell University Press, 1967), p.19.
671 Ronald Grime, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in its Practice, Essays on its Theory* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) pp.9-10.
672 A. Van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

situation.[673] The first category of the passage of *status* is the most relevant for this research. This includes a wide range of transitions when the individual moves from one status to another and includes birth, marriage and *death*.

Applying van Gennep's definition, death or funeral *rites* in this context are the specific phases which begin immediately after the death of an individual.[674] Also 'rites of passage' are the events or ceremonies which mark a deceased person's transition from one stage of life to another. Van Gennep identified that all rituals have a three-stage process and if we attempt to apply this three-stage process to death rites of passage this may look like the following:

In the first stage the person is separated from his or her role and leaves behind one social group and its social identity. In this context this is the actual point of death. In the second stage the person passes through a stage of no identity or affiliation through a period of *transition.* In this context this could be the period between the death and the funeral during which time the funeral planning takes place. Funerals not only include the practical aspects such as the disposal of the body, they must also deal with any 'pollution' that has occurred during this transition. In a Christian context this 'pollution' may not necessarily be caused by the deceased body itself as was the case under the civil law in the Old Testament (Numbers 19:11). The pollution could be regarded as the grief and the social dislocation caused to the bereaved family caused by the death.[675] The period of transition could also apply to the 'intermediate state' between death and the resurrection as discussed in chapter 4. The third stage is another stage of separation when the person is admitted to another social group with a new identity.[676] In this context this

[673] David Burnett, *World of the Spirits* (London: Monarch Books, 2000), p.89.
[674] Van Gennep., *The Rites of Passage*.
[675] Burnett, *World of the Spirits*, p.93.
[676] Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, p.94.

involves the disposal of the deceased body at the final ceremony, whether a cremation or burial. This stage can also be regarded as an initiation of the deceased into a new stage of existence. In this context, this would be the initiation into the afterlife at the resurrection.

Arguably, this three-stage process does not fit in harmoniously with the passage of death as well as other rites of passage such as marriage or baptism rituals. We have seen in chapter 4 that ordinary and official Pentecostal theologies assert that after death there is no point at which a departed soul has no identity, and personal identity is expected to continue after death. Furthermore, not all Pentecostals believe in an 'intermediate state' but rather believe in an 'immediate departure' into heaven after death. Therefore, for some Pentecostals Ven Gennep's model would have to be adapted to a 'two-stage' process as there would be no period of transition in the perspective of the *active participant* (the first-party perspective of the deceased) although there will still be a period of transition from the perspective of the *observer* (the third-party perspective of those living) according to Thiselton.[677]

Catherine Bell expands on van Gennep's work by categorising several types of ritual. Three of these rituals are relevant for this study: rites of passage (which we have previously discussed), rites of affliction, and rites of exchange and communion which are explored in the context of pastoral care and wakes.[678] These categories are not mutually exclusive, and any single ritual may contain overlapping dimensions from two or more types. Ronald Grimes explains that the ritual field 'is a physical-social place where one goes to do a study, as well as forming a pattern of interconnecting forces.'[679] The 'physical-social' place in this study are the actual funeral

[677] Thiselton, *The Last Things*, pp.75 -79.
[678] Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, pp.93-94.
[679] Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Colombia, University of South Carolina, 1994), p.10.

events. Daniel Albrecht also contributes to this discussion of death rituals as he identifies key ritual components in the context of Pentecostal ecclesiology.[680]

In this research I use the term *death* rituals as referring to the individually or communally enacted responses or events beginning with the point of the death of an individual. I also use the term *funeral* rituals as a sub-type of death rituals more specifically related to those series of events connected with the disposal of the body. In some cases, the terms *death* and *funeral* rituals are used interchangeably.

6.3 Rituals at the point of death

The first death ritual that will be examined in this chapter are those practices immediately after the death of an individual. During his interview, the pastor of COGOP (B'ham 1) spoke about some of the rituals that he performed:

> We do not have a specific formal ritual after the death of a person. We administer prayers and words of comfort with the family, giving them assurance that the person is in the arms of God if they believe in God. … There is a sense that you can help families to realise that it is okay to let them go. Basically, when people die, they are very emotional as you would expect, and sometimes you will need to try and calm them down. What we find is that the minister is the calming presence amongst the family.[681]

The pastor of Elim (B'ham) also shared what he would normally do at the point of someone's death:

> What I do is to read appropriate scripture and to pray with the individual and the family if they are present before the individual dies. After the death I tend to retreat to allow family members who are around to take in what is happening. That moment is really heavy, so you don't want to start preaching about the resurrection and what the family want is some space to reconcile their thoughts, feelings and emotions to deal with the

[680] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, pp.122 -140.
[681] Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 1).

> reality of the death. Maybe after a period I would draw closer to give some encouragement and comfort.[682]

The consensus amongst the pastors was that no-one administers the 'last rites' to the deceased *before* the death of an individual with the formality of Catholic and Anglican traditions. Anne Horton who authored a practical guide for Anglicans for 'Common Worship' services includes a section about 'last rites' for terminally sick persons. In the guide she points out that if there has been no previous opportunity for the dying person to make an act of penitence and receive absolution, a prayer of anointing is administered where possible.[683] It is also recommended that family and friends who are praying with the dying person should receive Holy Communion with them.[684] In contrast no such formal liturgy are utilised by the Pentecostal pastors in this study. However, some pastors indicated that they have anointed the dying with oil or led them into prayers of repentance where appropriate to do so. In the Catholic tradition, since Vatican Council II, emphasis has been placed on the idea that the anointing of the sick is no longer primarily the sacrament of dying, but of the seriously ill. Although 'last rites' are administered to those who are dying, officially there is no opportunity for communion once a person has died.[685] Similarly, Pentecostals do not minister to a person after their death because Pentecostals believe that after death, there is no further possibility of salvation for those who die unrepentant. This is based on their reading of biblical texts such as Hebrews 9:27 which suggest that opportunity for repentance only comes before death.[686] In practice this should not restrain pastors from guiding a person to repentance on their death bed *before* their death.

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[682] Interview, Pastor of Elim (B'ham).
[683] Anne Horton, *Using Common Worship Funerals: A practical guide to the new services* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), p.75.
[684] Church of England, *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), p.227.
[685] *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* (1983) referenced in Lizette Larson-Miller, *Lex Orandi: The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick* (Collegeville: Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005), pp.120-122.
[686] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.36.

However, once the person has died, the focus of Pentecostal Pastors is to minister to the living – the bereaved and not to the dead.

The pastor of the Great Barr Church also shared her experiences of ministering to the dying:

> Before I undertake any minor or major undertakings I rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance.[687]

This pastor's comments are typical of how Pentecostals minister to the bereaved – with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is appropriate to bring Pentecostal pneumatology into our discussion of Pentecostal death rituals.

According to Warrington, the classical Pentecostal approach is that the Holy Spirit is at work primarily through the agency of the church and its members. Thus, the Spirit is seen as the divine agent for the gathering of people, calling them to repentance and conversion, and stirring up their gifts for the life of the church community.[688] Mark Cartledge also makes the point that during Charismatic pastoral ministry, the inspiration of the Spirit can often manifest in an intense and exuberant manner. However, this approach may not be suitable in the context of ministering to the bereaved at the point of death. In fact, Cartledge points out that at other times the manifestation of the Spirit is 'less obvious and may be part and parcel of the routine life.'[689] Michael Welker's discussion about the 'veiled' presence of the Spirit also applies here as he describes how the Spirit quietly and covertly works for the benefit of those in need.[690] This point is picked up by Vladimir Lossky who emphasises that this work of the Spirit '… as person, remains unmanifested, hidden, concealing Himself in His very appearing.'[691] Similarly,

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[687] Interview with pastor of the Great Barr Church.
[688] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology,* pp.56-70.
[689] Mark Cartledge, *Encountering of the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), p.69.
[690] Bernd Oberdorfer, "The Holy Spirit – A Person? Reflection on the Spirit's Trinitarian Identity," in Michael Welker (ed.), *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), p.48.
[691] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1957), p.160.

the pastors in this research stated that they tend to give room for the Spirit to quietly administer his hidden presence to the closely bereaved after their loss. Since ministry to the bereaved needs to be approached with great care and humility the pastors appear to adapt their ministry accordingly.

An alternative picture is presented by the German systematic theologian, Bernd Oberdorder. He argues that the doctrine of the Trinity confronts us with the meaning of the revelation of God's creative, saving and redeeming work with the world which contributes to understanding the presence of the Spirit. Oberdorder describes the Spirit as a transforming, community-forming power, but a power which does not impose Himself without considering the characteristics and limits of human life. Therefore, for the recently bereaved, this means that the Spirit fulfils his transforming work by giving himself into the hands of fragile human beings echoing the apostle Paul's declaration – 'When I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor. 12:10).[692]

In his discussion of the work of the Spirit in the Johannine Gospel, Anthony Thistleton notes that 'Jesus promises that the Father and he would send his disciples "another Counsellor" (John 14:16, 26; 15:26, 16:7). The 'helper' or 'paraclete', from the Greek word *parakletos* (meaning "one who gives support") is a counsellor, adviser, strengthener, advocate and comforter. Thistleton also points out that the verb *parakaleo* strictly means to call alongside or to help. The Spirit witnesses to the character of Christ and demonstrates the close relation between Spirit and Christ.[693] Thus, for the pastors in this study the presence of the Spirit could be

[692] Bernd Oberdorfer, "The Holy Spirit – A Person?" p.45.
[693] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In biblical teaching through the centuries and today* (London: SPCK, 2013), p.140.

described as a *paraclete* who enables them to come alongside the bereaved to minister to their needs.

Alastair Heron suggests that Jesus considered himself to be the first paraclete as he promises to send 'another' helper after him who will carry on the work he has started (John 16:6-7).[694] James Dunn agrees with Heron by pointing out that the Spirit continues the presence of Jesus after his ascension that proceeds from the Father, as the second paraclete is given to teach the disciples (John 6:59, 7:14, 28; 8:20; 14:26).[695] Franz Muster's refers to two distinct layers of this Johannine teaching. Firstly, he sees the Holy Spirit administering apostolic teaching for the disciples of the past and present. Secondly, the Johannine 'paraclete' reveals more of Christ and is re-presented from a spiritual perspective. [696] This suggests that immediately after someone dies, the Spirit in his veiled presence as the paraclete is prepared to stand in harmony with the pastor to strengthen and comfort the bereaved to help them through their loss, irrespective of their faith.

6.4 Funeral Planning ('Organising Ritual')

In regard to Christian traditions in general, Kelly points out there is also a practical dimension to grieving which involves the closely bereaved carrying out practical tasks in relation to planning the funeral, also described as the 'organising ritual'. [697] The people involved in funeral planning, include funeral directors, clergy and the bereaved family. Each group will be examined in turn.

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[694] Alistair I. Heron, *The Holy Spirit:* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), p.10-11.
[695] James D. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), p.350.
[696] Franz Mussner, *The Historical Jesus in the Gospel of St. John,* Quaestiones Disputatae 19 (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), pp.45-46.
[697] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals,* p.32.

In this research I interviewed a Funeral Director (FD) who predominantly serves the African and Caribbean communities in the West Midlands. I asked him about his role in relation to funeral planning and who was responsible for making the most input in the organising of the funeral service. He responded:

> I would usually have a meeting with the family, and they would discuss what they would like for the funeral and the service. We would then book the cemetery or crematorium and churches… We can also sign post the client to a florist or a caterer.[698]

The FD also spoke about his interaction with church ministers:

> On most occasions the family would maintain contact with the ministers. Over the years we have built up a rapport with a lot of ministers within the West Midlands and we may not meet them until the morning of the funeral.[699]

The FD acknowledged that generally church ministers, especially Pentecostal ministers, contributed an important role in the funeral planning. However, according to Hugh James, historically funerals were organised not so much by the minister or the closely bereaved but by the professional directors employed to do so on their behalf. James also points out that the greater responsibility has resulted in 'undertakers' being referred to as 'funeral directors' to reflect their role of 'directing' the funeral. [700] However, in this research, ministers appear to play a more predominant role. The pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2), a BMC, explained his involvement in the funeral planning:

> It is a necessary role for the pastors or ministers to play when the bereaved are in a very traumatic state and there are a number of functions that we must perform. This includes dealing with the authorities which includes registering the death. Also making the plans for the funeral arrangements and contacting funeral directors. The role of the minister is to be supportive to the families and to be available to assist because we will have a

[698] Interview with Funeral Director, 20 March 2018.
[699] Interview with Funeral Director.
[700] James, *A Fitting End*, p.72.

> certain amount of knowledge and information to be able to share and to even help them to ensure they are covering all the areas that they need to.[701]

The pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1), another BMC, also described his responsibilities in this context:

> When we bring bereaved family into the church office or go to their house, we help them with the funeral programme and get the service order together. We offer the services of the preacher, organist, ushers and the church building for them to have at the service at so that their loved ones can be buried. We liaise with them and the funeral director to secure the date with the family and give them guidance also with the Bible readings, tributes and explain what the protocol of the service is.[702]

These two examples are largely representative of the level of involvement of BMC pastors in planning for a funeral. In contrast, the pastor of Elim (Staffs), a white-led church, who carried out mainly cremations, appeared to have considerably less involvement with the funeral planning. He explained that one of the important roles of a minister is to bury the dead, not just for members of his church congregation, but on behalf of the local community, irrespective of their faith. Similarly, other pastors in this study also sought to demonstrate the need to develop a more compassionate approach when they minister to the needs of different families in the time of their bereavement. For example, the pastor of Elim (B'ham), stated:

> There is a time of consolation with the family from the death to the funeral. In other words, you have pastoral support that you will give to the family that would come in different forms. But there is one significant element as you journey with the family through this period of bereavement. This includes dealing with any concerns that the family may have or family issues, divisions within the family or inheritance. That is all tied in with the pastoral support. Beyond that you will be talking about the funeral.[703]

[701] Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 2).
[702] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1).
[703] Interview, Pastor of Elim (B'ham).

This is an example of how important it is for pastors to give space to the bereaved family to express their feelings about any issues they have relating to the death.

In his study of death and bereavement, the sociologist Tony Walter expresses the need for people in their vulnerability and anxiety to know that their feelings are normal and appropriate.[704] In this research, it appears to be the pastors who provide an external point of reference to help the bereaved to come to terms with their own feelings. The pastor of the Egbaston Church outlines the approach taken in British Caribbean communities:

> The pastor really takes a very big part particularly in Caribbean funerals. So, some families have got no experience of loss. Some families have a lot of experience of loss. In all of those there is an expectation that the pastor will be there first on the scene. You have to be there early and constantly stay in touch with the family. You will meet with the nearest members of the family and offer spiritual or physical support.[705]

The kind of support provided by most of the pastors in the context of death and bereavement can be generally described as 'pastoral care'. Practical theologian and Chaplain, Ewan Kelly, identifies 'pastoral care' as a broad term within the context of care of the bereaved which encompasses person-centred spiritual care, pastoral care and spiritual direction.[706]

Applying these three concepts to this study, person-centred spiritual care is where the ritual leader seeks to co-construct a funeral with a family whose frame of reference for dealing with death and life after death does not include the Christian metanarrative. Such spiritual care seeks to help the bereaved to make sense of their experience with reference to their own worldview and does not seek to impose beliefs. Kelly cites Paul's first pastoral letter to the new church at Thessalonian that contains support and encouragement for a community who were grieving

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[704] Tony Walter, *Bereavement: The Culture of Grief* (Maidenhead: Open University Press), p.208.
[705] Interview, Pastor of Edgbaston Church, 12 May 2017.
[706] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.51.

which was relevant to their context and beliefs (1 Thess. 4:13).[707] In this research, person-centred spiritual care is demonstrated where pastors give the bereaved time, space and permission to verbalise their feelings and tell the story of their loved one rather than attempt to preach the gospel.[708]

Pastoral care is another form of care which can be given on an individual or a collective basis.[709] David Lyall reinforces this view by highlighted that pastoral care is given and received within the matrix of relationships which constitute a community of faith, in this case the Pentecostal communities.[710] In this research, it was quite common for pastors to have pre-existing relationships with the bereaved family through their church attendance, therefore, what occurs during a bereavement is simply part of an existing continuum of ministry.

Spiritual direction takes place within the context of a contractual, ongoing relationship between a church representative and the church member requesting direction.[711] Leech describes spiritual direction as being concerned with the spiritual nourishment of a person's life through talking, prayer, and discernment.[712] There was no evidence of spiritual direction provided by any of the pastors although it is uncertain whether this is a form of care the pastors would provide if invited to do so.

When the question was asked to the focus groups who normally makes the most contribution in organising the funeral, one of the participants responded:

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[707] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.43.
[708] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.41.
[709] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.52.
[710] D. Lyall, *Integrity of Pastoral Care* (London: SPCK, 2001), p.63.
[711] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.54.
[712] K. Leech, "Spiritual Direction," in A. Campbell (ed.), *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care* (London: SPCK, 1987), pp. 265-6.

> It is usually the family, but they have guidance probably from the pastor so that they can arrange the order of service.[713]

Many other participants in the focus group supported this view. In the research it was revealed that there would often be a core group of close family or friends who would be responsible for a particular aspect of the funeral planning. Kelly highlights that children who have lost their parents, who were old enough, tended to have far more say in the decisions that affected them if they were also members of the church. This explains why in this research, some participants appeared to play a more active role in the funeral planning than others.

One of the organising rituals carried out by certain family members of the British Caribbean participants is 'laying out' – the washing, dressing of the deceased body. This participant describes her experience:

> It was a difficult experience with the person being so close to you. The body is not stiff; it is quite supple because of the substance they take from the body. The way they prepare the body is by putting a slit in the clothes which simply goes over the top, so they are not dressed in a normal fashion.[714]

Preparing the body for the funeral also included more than dressing the deceased as the following participants demonstrate:

> It reminds me in our [Caribbean] tradition that the family would dress the body, do the makeup and hair. We do it as a family and make sure you are giving them a good send off.[715]

Thus, for British Caribbean participants in this research, the 'laying out' of their deceased relatives in preparation for burial is still performed by close family members rather than the

[713] V47 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[714] Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[715] V40 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.

funeral directors. In contrast, no such washing or dressing rituals were mentioned by the British African or white participants.

James argues that the funeral is not the entire domain of the pastor but belongs to the whole community involved which has a role to play.[716] Michael Wilkinson also argues that in contemporary Western society there is a focus on the autonomy of the individual and the proclivity for spirituality over organised religions.[717] In this research it did appear that the bereaved family have a significant role to play in funeral planning. However, none of the pastors expressed any concern that the bereaved family might 'take over' the control of the funeral, thereby undermining the Christian framework within which the service should dominate. The authority of the pastors and the church still seems to be largely respected.

MacDonald highlights that rather than adopting a strictly laity-clergy divide, Pentecostals tend to facilitate the involvement of multiple members in the ministry of the local church in accordance with the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers'.[718] Similarly, Warrington points out that every Christian believer receives a manifestation of the Spirit to facilitate their service in and behalf of the local church, meaning that all Christians are eligible to function as channels through whom he can minister to others (1 Cor. 12:6, Rom. 12:4-6). Furthermore, Pentecostals have always believed that one of the roles of the Spirit is to empower believers to enable all to function in the Christian community. However, Warrington highlights that in practice this has rarely resulted in most believers in a local church manifesting the spiritual gifts this way and the leadership of a local church appears to be the depository of most of the

[716] James, *A Fitting End*, p.58
[717] Michael Wilkinson, "Sociological Narratives and the Sociology of Pentecostalism," in Robeck, Jr and Yong (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, p.229.
[718] MacDonald, "Pentecostal Theology", p.67; B. Sun, "The Holy Spirit: The Missing Key in the Implementation of the Doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers", in Ma and Menzies (eds.), *Pentecostalism in Context*, pp.174-194.

gifts.[719] James points out that in a Christian funeral the church have traditionally taken a leading role in reflecting and shaping the beliefs of a faith community promoting the doctrines of the church which include presenting the Christian meaning and purpose of life and death.[720] In Pentecostal funerals it does appear that the church decides what the culturally approved rituals are in the funeral in accordance with the churches or denomination's doctrines and traditions. Also, it does appear that more often than not it is the pastor who takes the leading role in organising the funeral. However, this varies from funeral to funeral. The closely bereaved families appear to be increasing in control and influence compared with the past.

6.5 The ritual of 'nine-nights'

There is a common pre-funeral ritual called 'nine-nights' practiced amongst some of the participants which is described by this British Caribbean pastor:

> Sometimes there are a number of services that are held at the house called 'nine-nights' which helps the family mourn. In times past in the Caribbean this would then help the families to prepare themselves for the funeral. It would be the time when mourners would come around to give their condolences and the loved one would be laid to rest.[721]

This ritual was also shared by several participants across the focus groups. This participant from LLFC describes nine-nights as when:

> We come together, pray and sing songs, eat food in the black tradition.[722]

In general, the term 'nine-nights' [723] is the term used for a single or series of wakes which is held before the funeral. To help me get a better understanding of this ritual I attended a nine-

[719] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, pp.72-73.
[720] Hugh, *A Fitting End*, p.58.
[721] Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1).
[722] V19 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[723] Pronounced *ni-nights.*

nights event as an observer held for a deceased member at COGOP (B'ham 1) at the invitation of the senior pastor. The following is an extract from my field notes:

> There was approximately 35-40 people in attendance at the bereaved family home which included the deceased family members and members of their church. At the house the worship service was structured like a short church service. The service consisted of two songs, three prayers, a word of encouragement and a mini sermon. The prayer was a corporate prayer and was described as a 'prayer of covering' during which the bereaved family was surrounded by the visitors praying for them. The mini sermon was delivered by the pastor which lasted about 10 mins. The atmosphere was similar to a church. There was a sense of love and fellowship and the home felt like a place of worship.

After the nine-nights, I asked the pastor a few questions to get a better understanding about this event. He told me that:

> The family have kept up the tradition by holding nine-nights at the family home several nights running since her death.

He also said that the house has been similarly well attended each night with family and friends since the day after the church member died. This level of attendance is unusual nowadays as people within his local congregation did not consistently hold or attend nine-nights as they did in the past when a member of the church died. He explained that the reason why this was the exception was firstly because the deceased surviving parents were still from the older generation that respected the tradition. Secondly, because the family are close and active members of a large church with enough members to stagger their visits throughout this period.

6.5.1. Origins of nine-nights

Arnold van Gennep makes a point that certain rituals can only be properly understood in terms of how they are used in their original setting.[724] In terms of its original setting, this participant shared their views about nine-nights:

> I don't think that nine-nights is as common in this country as in the West Indies. You can have a night or two after the death but not everyone opens up their home each night before the funeral but nowadays there may be a night or two when everyone gets together. Back home in Jamaica, the door never closes and it never stops until even after the funeral.[725]

In fact, most of the participants agreed that nine-nights originated from the Caribbean, in particular Jamaica. However, most of the participants seem to be unaware how it began in the Caribbean and why it was called 'nine-nights'. A few participants thought that there was a special celebration either begun or ended on the ninth night after the person's death. It was also apparent that this was a *Caribbean* religious ritual rather than a Pentecostal one as it is practiced by the many members of the Caribbean diaspora irrespective of their religious affiliations. Robert Beckford, a leading Black British theologian, observes that the context of the African Caribbean Church in Britain has produced a distinctive black-British expression of Pentecostalism.[726] It may also be that the British Caribbean community have produced a distinctive black-British expression of nine-nights. It was also evident that nine-nights was practiced mainly in Jamaica and was less common in other Caribbean islands as these participants explained:

> I have experienced a few nine-nights in Trinidad and they do the nine-nights after the funeral.[727]

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[724] Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, p.35.
[725] V15 of AOG Church Focus Group.
[726] Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: Political Theology for Black Churches in Britain* (London: SPCK, 2000), p.171.
[727] V40 of NTCOG (Black Country) Focus Group.

> My parents came from St Kitts and they never had nine-nights.[728]

In fact, most participants who descend from other Caribbean islands did not experience nine-nights at all in their countries of origin. However, most of them still participated in nine-nights in Britain. It was also apparent that 'nine-nights' was only specific amongst the Black Caribbeans and not the black African Churches in the research. A participant of Zimbabwean origin shared the following in one of the focus groups:

> In my culture between death and burial it is just two days so there is not really much time. The reason why it is only two days could be because of the heat.[729]

Therefore, it is likely that in most African countries where the average temperature is higher throughout the year there is little opportunity to have a long ritual event between the death and the funeral. However, a British Nigerian participant from RCCG did share the following experience:

> When they are Christians, people would want to visit the family house regularly, sometimes on a daily basis. They go there not just to dine, but to support the bereaved and they pray consistently until the funeral – committing the programme to the hands of God, committing the family to the hands of God, that nothing will happen to them, that at the burial everything will go on well. That is what the local church is inclined to do. The family will not be left alone.[730]

From this description, this ritual appears to be similar to nine-nights in the sense that it is a gathering of worship and fellowship together with the provision of practical support. The main difference is that the Nigerians do not call it 'nine-nights'

[728] V16 of NTCOG (B'ham 2) Focus Group.
[729] V34 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[730] V22 of RCCG (2) Focus Group.

Another distinctive ritual amongst African Pentecostals is the 'service of song' as described by this participant from RCCG:

> We also have a 'service of song'...Generally speaking, it's a time to thank God on behalf of the departed for the life that has been spent. There is a time to preach to people to let them understand that one day we are going to have to join the departed one. It is a time to come together, sometimes the day before the funeral or it could be some days before. In some cases where the person dies in England sometimes the service of song would take place in Nigeria.[731]

Therefore, the 'service of song' seems to originate from Nigeria or West Africa.[732] This ritual appears to be similar to nine-nights in the sense that it is a gathering of worship and fellowship together. The main difference is that the 'service of song' tends to be held in a formal church setting.

The pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1) shared a useful insight into the possible origins of 'nine-nights':

> For those people who are still scared that the loved ones are still moving around the house [as a spirit], they have nine-nights so that they can be laid to rest properly and guard against any of those spirits. That is the belief of those who are non-Christian as a traditional cultic practice.[733]

One of the participants also had a similar understanding:

> I do not understand why we practice is 'nine-nights'. Are we not trying to sing peoples [spirit] into heaven as they are already passed away? I do not see this thing as being scriptural.[734]

Both of these views seem to suggest that there is a spiritual root to nine-nights which is non-Christian. According to the Jamaican scholar Richard Leary, it was believed by African slaves

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[731] V23 of RCCG (2) Focus Group.
[732] However, this could not be confirmed without further investigation of other African-based churches in the UK which was beyond the scope of this research and there was not an opportunity to attend a 'service of song' funeral service.
[733] Interview with pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1).
[734] V38 of NTCOG (Black Country) Focus Group.

that a person's spirit took nine days to travel home to Africa. Therefore, family and friends gather at the dead person's home to comfort the bereaved, and to give the spirit a good send off from this world the ninth night after their death. However, Leary points out that this may be done on one or many nights, with the ninth night or the night immediately preceding the funeral being of the most importance.[735] Therefore nine-nights appears to have originated on the basis of Caribbean folk religion or superstition about the journey of the deceased 'spirit'. The significance of Caribbean *superstitions* in this context will be examined later on in this chapter.

6.5.2 Cultural context of nine-nights

The experience of British Africans and Caribbean participants with regards to wakes and other death rituals contrasts with that of the white British Pentecostals as these participant accounts demonstrate:

> In the British culture we don't like dealing with death, so we don't have many rituals. When I was a child the ritual would be when somebody died we would close all the curtains in the house from the time of death until the funeral. That ritual has gone now because [white British] people would like to ignore the fact that someone has died so from my social background or class we don't really have any.[736]

> This always stuck with me as there is a kind of dark humour about death and about how we deal with it as a culture… That shows the disrespect in contemporary society and perhaps this shows something about British people who don't deal with death [very well].[737]

However, there was one white British participant who recounted that his culture did not always deal with death this way:

> V40 - When I was a kid the tradition was that the body in an open coffin would be placed in a room in the house where people would visit the house and pay their respects.

[735] Richard Leary, "Funerals in Jamaica," *The Passionists' Compassion. Spring* (1997), p.48.
[736] V32 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[737] V42 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.

> It is not just when I was a kid - I recall when [my wife's] Nan passed away, and that was the case even then. When I was a kid that happened always everywhere.
>
> LR – How long was the body in the house for?
>
> V40 – From the death to the actual funeral which would have been about 1 – 2 weeks.[738]

These views correspond with Kelly who explains that how an individual or group mourns will depend on the cultural and religious norms of the families and the community people belong to.[739] He highlights that within the dominant white British culture, death has largely remained privatised and sanitised.[740] Berger defines 'culture' in its conventional social scientific sense as 'the beliefs, values, and lifestyles of ordinary people in their everyday existence.'[741] The primary features of culture include a past history, a dominant religion, a set of core values and traditions.[742] Graham and Walton *et al* have stressed the importance of theology taking on the characteristics of local cultures in order to speak in the vernacular: utilising the everyday actions, language and symbols of ordinary people.[743]

In this research, the white British participants stated that 'wakes' rarely took place before the funeral and only close family and friends would be expected to attend. Amongst the British Caribbean participants, nine-nights reflects the cultural and religious customs of the Caribbean community rooted in both the Caribbean and Africa. Nine-nights consists of those culturally approved rituals and other actions of ordinary people in the British Caribbean communities which anyone who knew the deceased could attend, whether they were close to the deceased or not. One reason for this is that nine-nights is a ritual that can potentially temporarily unify

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[738] Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[739] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.29.
[740] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals,* p.18.
[741] Peter. L. Berger & Samuel P. Huntington, *Many Globalisations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2004), p.2.
[742] Parkes, Laungani & Young, *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures,* p.20.
[743] E. Graham, H. Walton and F. Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005), p.200.

close family and friends who quite often have become fragmented over the years through migrating to different locations, in the UK and abroad. Cooke points out that after the death of a loved one ritualising brings about a rather deep and lasting human bonding as people reconnect and develop a respect for one another.[744] Kelly points out that there is a *social* dimension to how an individual or group mourns or meets depending on the cultural and religious norms in the local context.[745] This social dimension has echoes of Akan ceremonies in Ghana. The West African scholar, Busia writes:

> Rituals surround important seasonal community activities as well the critical periods of an individual life. Planting, harvesting and fishing, birth, puberty, marriage – these are occasions for the community or kin group to come together, to join in song and dance or in ritual to give expression to the sense of dependence on the ancestors or on other supernatural powers.[746]

Similarly, for the British Caribbeans in this research, nine-nights can be considered as an important seasonal community activity which takes place after the critical period of a person's death. Unlike the Akan ceremonies there is not a strong sense of dependence on the ancestors or the recently deceased as already discussed in chapter 5. However, in this community there is the profound need for human solidarity and contact at such time and nine-nights provide a collective approval context which enables permission for the corporate expression of celebration of the deceased life as well as shared feelings about their loss.

According to Long, Christian funeral practices and rituals emerge at the intersection of necessity, custom and conviction.[747] Applying these concepts to this research, *necessity* arises as a result of the universal fact that every human being eventually dies and death creates certain

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[744] Bernard Cooke, *Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an experience-based Pneumatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.149.
[745] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.29.
[746] Busia, *Akan Doctrine of God*, p.37.
[747] Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*, p.8.

social needs and obligations that cannot be avoided. Local *customs* offer possibilities for what actions are expected and for what seems fitting to do and not to do in the face of death.[748] The *conviction* to carry out nine-nights does appear to lie with the older rather than the younger generation that respected the tradition. This inter-generational tension will be explored further.

6.5.3 Inter-generational dialogue

Despite the importance placed on this Caribbean ritual, a number of the participants stated that 'nine-nights' appeared to be a dying trend in the community. This young participant shared his thoughts:

> When people came to my house for nine-nights, there is no space and you have no time to think. I understand that people want to come to support the family, but I was upset for not getting the space I wanted. I believe that nine-nights is dying out for my generation.[749]

Another participant shared this view:

> One of the changes I am noticing is that when they have the wakes the bereaved need that time to think and you need that space. I understand the support but what I am seeing with the younger generation I am seeing a time allocated when the wakes should happen. The bereaved need time to adjust physically, spiritually and emotionally. We may be losing something culturally, but I think that the younger generation are using more wisdom.[750]

For these participants, nine-nights is assumed to be less relevant to the younger generation today than it was amongst the first generation of Caribbean immigrants in the 60s to 80s.

The sociologists, Winograd and Hais, point out that that a new community or cohort of people emerge every eight decades.[751] However, Twenge disagrees with Winograd and Hais and

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[748] Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*, pp.9-10.
[749] V40 of NTCOG (Black Country) Focus Group.
[750] V38 of NTCOG (Black Country) Focus Group.
[751] Morley Winograd and Michael Hais, *Millennial momentum: How a New Generation is remaking America* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp.1-4.

argues that generations are not necessarily defined by age, but significantly by the larger socio-cultural environment of different time periods.[752] Emery White argues the speed of change in culture, coupled with the multiplicity of cultures in any single community, especially in the West, makes it difficult to define generations.[753] Each generation is influenced by wider factors, for example, family background, media, social and cultural traditions that create common value systems which distinguish each generation from another.[754] Therefore, discussion on generations requires to be contextualised within the local culture.

In this context the British Caribbeans living in Britain constitute a generation of people because they have similar socio-cultural entities. According to Caribbean theologian, Joe Aldred, the 'first generation' refers to the 'Windrush' generation of Caribbean immigrants who migrated from the Caribbean when they were 18 years or older. The 'second generation' refers to the children of the Windrush generation and the third is their grandchildren and so on. The third and fourth generation of British Caribbeans are growing in a cultural environment significantly different from what the first and second generations experienced.[755] Situating the British Caribbean generations within the field research, they ranged between the first, second and third generation British Caribbeans although predominately consisting of first and second generations. Speaking from a Caribbean perspective, Aldred argues that many BMCs were set up to cater for their own without necessarily looking to bridge cultural gaps.[756] Unlike the first generation of immigrants who started the church as a response to a need, which included

[752] Jean M. Wenge, Keith Campbell and Elise Freeman, "Generational Differences in Young Adults: Life Goals, Concern for Others, and Civic Orientation, 1966–2009," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2010), pp.1045-1062 (1045).
[753] James White, Meet Generation Z (Michigan: Zondervan, 2017) p.39.
[754] Namita Rajpu, Ritu nee Bali Kochhar, and Deepti Kesarwani, "Generational Diversity: A Challenge for Leading Lights: An Analytical Study in the Education Sector," *Global Journal of Enterprise Information System* (2013), pp.24-32.
[755] Aldred, *Respect*, p.70-73.
[756] Joe Aldred, "Response to Roswith Gerloff's Pentecostals in the African Diaspora," in Walter J. Hollenweger, Allan A. Anderson (eds.), *Pentecostals after a Century*, p.87-88.

maintaining a cultural identity, the second and third generation members are more integrated in the British culture and do not necessarily share the same needs as their parents.

In terms of multi-generational approaches to death rituals, according to Thomas Long there is a rapidly emerging trend in Christian funerals in the last twenty years of British Christians abandoning previously established customs in favour of new ways of memorializing the dead. Contemporary social changes and the decline of the Church's influence appear to have contributed to the secularisation of death and funeral rituals throughout different communities in Britain.[757] Similarly, Paul Ballard outlines three hallmarks of postmodern culture that may have contributed to the secularisation of funeral rites: the collapse of metanarratives; the autonomy of the individual; and a sharp divide between the public and private.[758] However, I will only be focusing on 'the collapse of metanarratives' and 'the autonomy of the individual' which are more relevant to this study.

Regarding 'the collapse of metanarratives,' Ballard explains that the church is perceived, especially by the older generation within the church, as being rooted in biblical doctrine based on objective truths. However, the younger generation now live in a matrix of an increasing diversity of religions and worldviews. The Christian story is viewed as only one of a plethora of narratives from which an individual can select and form their own subjective truths.[759] Thus, amongst British Caribbeans the metanarrative of the Pentecostal or Christian church is no longer the core frame of reference by which many people construct their worldviews or their sense of identity. Even the death rituals which are rooted in Caribbean history and culture may

[757] Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*, p.107.
[758] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.11.
[759] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.12.

not still resonate with the younger generation. In particular, the younger generation are less exposed to death rituals and they are not necessarily knowledgeable about the older generations' traditions and culture. In this research there appears to be less emphasis by the third and fourth generation of young people on seeking rituals following death using symbols and theologically based language familiar to the older generation and more on expressing their own spirituality through less rigid rituals. For Ballard, the beliefs and practices of individuals in our post-modern world are increasingly becoming more attentive to their own experiences, feelings and perceived need. [760] Thus, for British Caribbeans what appears to have gradually occurred in the younger generation is the passage from traditional forms of death rituals such as 'nine-nights' to more individual or family expressions of grief. In contrast, the older generation are more dedicated to the cultural retentions they have brought over from the Caribbean and are still drawn to communal means of expressing their grief.

6.5.4 The ecclesiology of nine-nights

In the Handsworth Church focus group two participants shared their views about what they do during nine-nights:

> We normally talk and reminisce about the deceased life.[761]

> People don't just meet and greet and sing songs. When the person is a Christian the main activity is prayer for the family so they can be strengthened.[762]

As we see there is a slight difference as to whether nine-nights is primarily a *religious* ritual or a *social* engagement ritual. Therefore, it would be useful to examine how nine-nights converge

[760] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.15
[761] V19 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[762] V20 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.

or diverge with 'formal' ecclesiology from Pentecostal scholars and wider Christian traditions to determine the extent of its religiosity.

Firstly, Warrington makes the point that classical Pentecostals do not own a distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology.[763] Kärkkäinen agrees and explains that one of the reasons for the limited focus on developing an ecclesiology is due to the focus on eschatology and the need to evangelise the world before the imminent return of Jesus.[764] Similarly, Simon Chan advocates the importance of the interactive nature of the Pentecostal Church which is living in the keen recognition that it is an eschatological community whose existence is based on the work of the Spirit and the human articulation.[765] This essentially means that the church is more people-centred than institutionally centred. However, Kärkkäinen does acknowledge that Pentecostals increasingly are prepared to explore ecclesiological issues and to dialogue with others outside of their tradition.[766] This approach is supported by Clark who writes: 'The rise of world Pentecostalism has relativized the whole concept of structures for thinking Pentecostals by bringing home the fact that the best structure is the one that works in its local context.'[767] Therefore, it could be said that 'nine-nights' provides a pragmatic, rather than an imposed ecclesiological structure which works in the context of death rituals in the Pentecostal communities.

Miroslav Volf leans towards a more sober expression of what exactly constitutes the 'church' by describing it as: 'a community of people who congregate in order to call on, to testify and

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[763] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.131.
[764] V-M, Kärkkäinen, "Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue," *JPT* Vol 18 (2001), pp.100-121.
[765] Simon Chan, "Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *PNEUMA* Vol 22, no. 2 (2000), pp.184-208.
[766] V-M Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002), pp.7-10.
[767] M. S. Clark and H. I Ledele (eds.), *What is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* University of South Africa, Retrieved on 1 April 2019 from http//uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/19535/Clark_SM_0869816969_Section1, p.41.

to confess Christ the liberator.' They do not need to be characterised by a certain grade of personal or social holiness in order to be called the church.'[768] Nine-nights may not be a 'church' in the traditional sense as Volf describes but it can be recognised as a community of people who congregate to testify Christ in the midst of their loss. During this time there is permission for the corporate expression of shared feelings simply by being present and supporting the bereaved family at their home.

In terms of the dimensions of Pentecostal ecclesiology, for Warrington, Pentecostal worship is generally used to refer to the adoration of God and to those occasions when believers engage in an act of private or corporate praise of God. He also identified worship as involving communal activity, including corporate singing and praying.[769] Joel Edwards highlights that black Pentecostals have always enjoyed a greater degree of liberty and expressiveness in their songs and sing styles related to their culture.[770] Similarly according to Walsh, the central feature of Pentecostal meetings is that worship tends to be expressive and free, in the sense that there is no liturgical framework, although there is often a structure.[771] During the nine-nights, I observed that there may have been no liturgical framework, but there was a sense of structure throughout the service led by the pastor. I also observed that there was certainly a high level of expressiveness with songs that were not read from hymn books or song sheets, but 'tracked' by a worship leader which is common in Pentecostal worship settings.[772] Martin Lindhardt notes that spontaneity as an indication of divine inspiration is a characteristic feature of Pentecostal ritual language. Sermons are also commonly attributed to divine inspiration in

[768] Miroslav Volf, "Kirche als Gemeinshaft," *Evangelise Theologie* Vol 49.1 (19890, p. 54.
[769] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.219 & 221.
[770] Joel Edwards, *Let's Praise Him Again* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1992), pp.68-70.
[771] T. Walsh, "A Sane People Free from Fads, Fancies and Extravagances: Rhetoric ad Reality of Collective Worship during the First Decade of the Pentecostal Movement in Britain," *JEPTA* Vol 24 (2004), pp.101-119.
[772] Song 'tracking' is where a worship leader shouts out each line of the song as a prompt to members of the congregation to sing the words they may be unfamiliar with.

Pentecostal churches.[773] From my observation, whilst the officiating minister read a couple of passages from the Bible as the foundation of his mini-sermon the rest of his sermon was delivered without the support of written notes, which was a demonstration of the Pentecostal belief in divine inspiration.

The AOG Pentecostal minister, David DuPlessis, suggests that in 'a good Pentecostal meeting there is an atmosphere where something is happening'.[774] Hocken adds that Pentecostal believers do not come to a church so much but to a meeting – where they meet with each other and with God.[775] Also, according to the New Testament scholar Raymond Collins, in his exegesis of the first book of Thessalonians: 'Gatherings require people, a time to gather, and a place in which to gather'. However, Collins argues that the epistle did not indicate the place where the audience gathered to listen to his message. He suggests that it is likely that the Thessalonians gathered in the home of a member of their community rather than a public place.[776] He also points out that in Greek, the word *oikos* and its synonym *oikia,* meant house, home or dwelling place. Thus the home was also a place where a visitor expected hospitality and amongst the Jews, hospitality was an expression of the covenant relationship that bound members of the chosen people to one another (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:3).[777] Similarly, amongst attendees at the nine-nights, hospitality was displayed and appeared to be an expression of love that bound them together as a church and an expression of support to the closely bereaved in their homes.

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[773] Lindhardt, "Introduction" in Martin Lindhardt (ed.), *Practicing the Faith,* p.5.
[774] David DuPlessis & Bob Slosser, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost: As told to Bob Slossor (*Wellington: Logos International, 1977), p.183.
[775] Peter Hocken "A Charismatic View on the Distinctiveness of Pentecostalism," *Pentecostalism in Context,* Jan 1997 pp.96-106 (98).
[776] Raymond F. Collins, *The Many Faces of the Church: A Study in New Testament Ecclesiology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), p.15.
[777] Collins, *The Many Faces of the Church,* pp.17-18.

Harold Turner argues for a 'theology of space' for further understanding of the place that provides the special settings for worship, both in physical structures and in interpretations.[778] He highlights diverse ways in which the sacred space serves as a special point in this world where worshippers 'may share in the reality of the divine life with its vitality'.[779] He also questions whether buildings dedicated to worship are really necessary and suggest that sacred spaces can derive holiness by association with it sacred acts of worship.[780] Disagreeing with Turner, William Dyrness argues that a flexible worship space is not sufficient for a developed ecclesiology. What is missing is a theological conception of the representation of the space the church occupies. Dyrness rejects the notion that the church is simply a gathering of believers into the body of Christ by the power of the Spirit. He argues that it is also a historically and culturally situated institution that represents some shape to the world.[781]

The sociologist Malcolm Gold's study of a Pentecostal church is more aligned with Turner's position on this subject. Gold examines the physical transformation of an Assemblies of God church over a 20-year period (1980-2000). Drawing on data from an ethnographic study, significant issues arise concerning the use of 'sacred space', church artefacts and religious symbols. He points out that Pentecostals, generally, would reject the notion of a specific building in which God dwells and the prerequisites for God's presence are the act of Christians gathering together 'in His name' and worshipping.[782]

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[778] H.W., Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The phenomenology and theology of places of worship* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1979), pp.6-11.
[779] Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House*, p. 323.
[780] Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House*, pp. 323-328.
[781] Mark Husbands and Daniel Treier (eds.), *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), p.254-255.
[782] Malcolm Gold, "From the Upper room to the Christian centre: Changes in the use of Sacred Space" in William Keenan and Elisabeth Arweck (eds.), *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

Similarly, Hunston argues that the focus of Pentecostal worship is not on the space the gathering of people occupies but on the event of worship itself which is dynamic and living in character. Therefore, no physical mediation was necessary and union with Christ is accomplished inwardly by the empowering role of the Holy Spirit (John 14:12-17). Hunston calls it a 'Spirit ecclesiology' which places the central importance of Pentecostal worship as people being led by the Spirit rather than relying on formal settings or liturgy.[783] Therefore, through the empowerment of the Spirit the worship *acts* would be regarded as more sacred than the worship *spaces* for Pentecostals. Simon Chan takes this dimension of pneumatology further by arguing that the church is not only Spirit-filled, the church is the special place where the Spirit is present on the earth.[784] In other words, the Spirit constitutes the church giving gatherings like nine-nights its unique identity as a Spirit-filled body.

There are some African Pentecostals who converge more closely with Dyrness' ecclesiology and regard the church building and land where believers gather to worship as a sacred space. Biodun Ogundayo argues that in Yoruba traditional religion physical space is the ultimate African sacred space 'because of its centrality in its construction, maintenance, and sustenance of African/Yoruba identity and spirituality'.[785] This aspect of Yoruba traditional religion is likely to have been retained in some West African Churches including RCCG. Therefore, not all Pentecostals would agree that worship is unconnected with any particular space, and for some, the building may also be considered sacred.

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[783] R. Hunston, "Church-the Body of Christ" in Brewster, *Pentecostal Doctrine*, pp.139-48 (147).
[784] Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Eugene, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), p.110.
[785] BioDun J. Ogundayo, "The Metaphysics of Space in Yoruba Traditional Religion," in BioDun J. Ogundayo, Julius O. Adekunle (eds.), *African Sacred Spaces: Culture, History, and Change* (London: Lexington Books, 2019), pp.113 -123.

For a more comprehensive Pentecostal ecclesiology, Albrecht identifies three key components in framing any worldview: ritual time, ritual space and ritual identity.[786] In terms of ritual time, Albrecht points out that 'Pentecostals both shape time and are shaped by sacred and ritual time'. The three main frames of time operate in three cycles: the cycle of weekly services, annual services and lifetime services. Pentecostal rites of passage provide the key moments in a lifetime cycle and Albrecht lists 'conversion', Spirit Baptism and 'healing' among them.[787] However I would also add to this list *death* and the events which follow within a lifetime cycle.

For Albrecht, space provides the physical boundary and places of worship play a very important role in Pentecostal church life.[788] He points out that for Pentecostals, any spaces in which Christians come together to worship has important prominence. People often create a ritual place, outside of the church, in which to experience God which he describes as a 'transcending' sacred space.[789] For Albrecht, the goal is not only to experience God within the ritual space of the sanctuary, but it is to view the whole world potentially as a sacred space sanctified by the people of God.[790] Similarly, Pentecostals treat the homes of the deceased family as a 'transcending' sacred space for worship, not only for nine-nights but for many forms of meetings such as small group or prayer meetings. For Pentecostals, the flexibility of worship spaces can be traced to the Reformation. Calvin makes the point that congregational singing, public prayers, and the preaching of the word is where the body of Christ is constituted.[791]

[786] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, pp.122-123.
[787] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, pp.124 -125.
[788] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, pp.127 -128.
[789] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, pp.127-128.
[790] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, pp.128 &135-136.
[791] John Calvin, *Theological Treaties*, J.K.S Reid (ed.) (London: SCM, 1954), p.157.

In terms of Pentecostal ritual roles and identities Albrecht identifies the ritual roles in two main divisions, 'congregational identity/roles' and 'liturgical identity roles'. He also identifies five functional roles that a congregant may play during the service: a worshipper, prophet, minister, listener/learner, and doer/disciple.[792]

Within the context of this study, at each of the funeral events the bereaved still see themselves as active worshipers which is practiced with the full engagement of the 'ritualist'. The role of a prophet was not exhibited at the funeral events I observed and it may be because prophetic participation may not be appropriate within a bereaved setting. However, the role of minister was not reserved for only the clergy at the funeral events I observed. The bereaved congregants not only gather together to worship, but they also gather to pray, care and support the bereaved family. The fourth role of listener/learner was open to all the bereaved worshipers as they hear and discern the word of God within the spoken words and songs of praise. Listening to the officiating minister comes first and responding to that word follows. The fifth role as a doer/disciple is where the bereaved express their responsiveness to the word of God. According to Albrecht, disciples normally minister to needs, heal the sick and engage in other activities seen as redemptive and responsive to human need.[793] In this context, the pastors minister to the closely bereaved as they support them spiritually and practically in their grief.

For the second main division - liturgical identity roles - Albrecht points out that in principle any Pentecostal believer may 'lead' during a given moment in the nine-nights service as the role of leadership does not normally reside with the clergy alone. However, during the nine-nights I attended, I only observed the officiating minister, and those he or she specifically

[792] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit,* p.136.
[793] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit,* p.138.

directs, leading the worship service. Albrecht also points out that the ritual roles of the clergy are primarily three-fold: 'facilitator/coordinator, the authority and the expert/specialist.[794] In this study, as a role of facilitator/coordinator the officiating minister facilitated and coordinated the nine-nights while they were present.

The second role of ritual leadership is that of authority. During the funeral events I observed that the bereaved congregation always respected the authority of the officiating minister and followed their lead. The third role of ritual leadership is as expert/specialist. Albrecht points out that fundamentally, Pentecostals believe that any believer gifted by the Holy Spirit can function in nearly any liturgical role. Indeed, this democratization of prayer was reflected in the session I attended as everyone was invited to pray a 'collective' prayer in support of the closely bereaved. However, they also believe that through special training and experience clergy is seen as an expert or specialist.[795] Due to the sensitivity that clergy need to display in the time of bereavement I would go further by saying most of the officiating ministers appeared to possess a particular level of experience to officiate the funeral events as they carried out their function with confidence and composure.

Although worship was the core feature of 'nine-nights' there were several other activities that took place. In terms of non-worship activities during nine-nights, other activities mentioned by participants included having food and drink (including alcohol), playing games (mainly

[794] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit,* p.139-140.
[795] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit,* p.140.

dominos or card games) and general socialising. Kärkkäinen uses the term 'fellowship' to describe more holistic activities administered by the church.[796]

The meals shared during the nine-nights ritual could be compared to the special meals which Christians participated in the New Testament church. Collins highlights that the New Testament describes what happened when the Corinthian believers came together for a *poluck* supper. *Poluck* is a Greek word meaning a meal, especially one offered to a guest, consisting of whatever food is available. According to Collins, such meals were a common feature of the Hellenistic world and reciprocity, sharing and equality were the hallmarks of true *eranos* – 'a banquet to which the guests bring contributions of food, a no-host dinner.'[797] Similarly, reciprocity, sharing and equality were hallmarks of the nine-nights I observed where the bereaved family and visitors, including both clergy and laity all had the opportunity to share the same food and drink. Collins makes a distinction between shared *eranoi* and shared *Eucharist.* When the Hellenistic groups came together and had an *eranoi* meal – a libation was offered to the deity after the meal, and an after-dinner speech was to follow. The Lords Supper that Paul described in 1 Corinthians 11 seems to have followed the same pattern, with one notable exception, namely that the narrative of Christ's death replaced the customary libation to the deity.[798] Nine-nights takes on some features of an *eranoi* meal; the difference being that the worship ends with a sermon-speech and the shared meal then follows.

Another participant highlighted that an important aspect of nine-nights was to come together to 'talk and reminisce about the deceased's life'.[799] According to Pentecostal scholar Cheryl

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[796] V-M Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Maryland, University Press of America, 2002), p.368.
[797] Collins, *The Many Faces of the Church*, pp.21-22.
[798] Collins, *The Many Faces of the Church*, p. 23.
[799] V19 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.

Bridges Johns, these stories and testimonies represent the oral-narrative which is an importance source of theological enquiry in many Pentecostal traditions.[800] Therefore, at these gatherings there is a continuous narration of the common past about the deceased that is being transmitted through the conversations of the attendees.

In general, the nine-night gatherings seem to transcend the boundaries of strictly sacred and non-sacred, or religious and non-religious activities. These gatherings form part of what Collins and Coleman refer to as all-pervading aesthetic habitus, which always has the potential for inspired action.[801] Also, British Caribbean death rituals like nine-nights are black socio-cultural as well as religious expressions. The sociologist Arin Nassehi calls this phenomenon the culturalization of religion, which adds to its subjectification.[802] According to Wilhelm Grab: "A formal-functional concept of religion opens a discursive space in which human living expressions may be interpreted as religious, even if they do not take themselves to be religious per se". He calls this 'religious communication'. [803] Applying this concept, nine-nights may be described as a discursive space in which the range of expressions of the bereaved may be interpreted as religious even though not strictly worship.

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[800] Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the oppressed* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p.87.

[801] Simon Coleman & Peter Collins, "The 'Plain' and the 'Positive': Ritual, Experience and Aesthetics in Quakerism and Charismatic Christianity." *Journal of contemporary religion,* Vol 1 .3 (2000), pp.317-329.

[802] Armin Nassehi, "Religious communication," *Bertelsmann Stifuing* (Hg) (2008), pp.169-204.

[803] Wilhelm Grab, "Practical Theology as a Religious and Cultural Hermeneutics of Christian Practice," *De Gruyer,* DOI. 10.151/ijpt (2012) 16(1), pp.79-92 (85).

6.6 Superstitions in the context of death rituals

A participant from the AOG Church focus group shared the following:

> One of the rituals widows are encouraged to do after they have lost their husbands is to wear red knickers for a period…To keep the spirit of their dead husband away from them.[804]

There were many examples of similar types of rituals shared by the participants from this church and other focus groups. One woman shared that after someone dies a tape measure is placed on the internal door frame of the house of the deceased. Another mentioned the need to move the furniture around in the bedroom where the deceased slept. Other participants mentioned that the 23rd or 27th Psalms of the Old Testament would be read out loud and repeated and sometimes the Bible would be left open in the room at the respective passage. Another example is where the belongings of the deceased are bagged up and put outside the house after a specific number of days after their death. One of the pastors shared that some of these practices included clothes being turned inside out, water left in a bucket by the door, and nutmeg being sprinkled on the window.

These rituals practiced after someone's death would be described as 'superstitions' which are also known as a type of 'folk religion' according to Mark Cartledge.[805] 'Folk religion' is described by Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou, as religious beliefs and practices of ordinary people shared by all the members of a particular community transmitted orally between community members.[806] Bell's definition of rituals also applies to superstitions which consist of words, actions and symbols that are believed to have the power to alter the state of individuals and

[804] V48 of AOG Church Focus Group.
[805] Cartledge, *Testimony of the Spirit.*
[806] Paul G Hiebert, R Daniel Shaw, Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2003), p.75.

society.[807] Jonathan Smith points to how historically specific rituals attempt to create broad patterns of order and meaning particular in religious practice. Applying Smith's theory in this context, rituals are a 'focusing lens' through which people can attempt to see, or argue for, what is significant in real life.[808] In this research, it is mainly the British Caribbean community who adhere to superstitious beliefs and rituals relating to death.

6.6.1 Caribbean and African roots of superstition

Most of the participants in the focus groups believed that the superstitions they shared originated from the Caribbean but few were able to explain why they were practiced. In her publication, *Some Jamaican Rites of Passage,* the Jamaican folk religion writer Marjorie Lewis-Cooper identifies many of these superstitions that were shared by the participants and provides an explanation why they are practiced in the Caribbean.[809] These include a person of the opposite sex related to the widow sleeping in the matrimonial bed with the widow to ward off the spirit of the deceased (known as 'keeping the bed front'). If it was felt that the spirit of the deceased was lingering around the home, the 23rd or 27th Psalms would be read out loud and repeated in order to exorcise the home of the spirit. The furniture in the bedroom of the deceased would be rearranged in the belief that this would prevent the deceased spirit from finding its way around the house. On the ninth day of the death, the belongings of the deceased

[807] Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, pp.8-12.
[808] Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), p.104.
[809] There also a number of superstitions in relation to death rituals Cooper identifies that were not mentioned in the focus groups, apart from libations of rum poured as an offering to the deceased spirit which will be discussed in the next chapter. See Marjorie Lewis-Cooper, "Some Jamaican Rites of Passage: Reflections for the Twenty-First Century," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis*, May 2001, Issue 6, p.53.

are bagged up and put outside the house and this is said to 'turn him out' meaning to ward off the spirit.[810]

Several Caribbean scholars provide insight into the origins of these superstitions. The historian, Olive Senior, identified two main forms of folk religion practiced in Jamaica - *obeah* and *myalism*. She describes obeah as: 'The word used in Jamaica to denote witchcraft, evil magic or sorcery by which supernatural power is invoked to achieve personal protection or the destruction of enemies'.[811] Also, according to Margarite Fernandez-Olmos and Lizbeth Paravisini-Gerbert, obeah incorporates two basic categories of practice: healing practices based on the use of elements in the natural world and witchcraft, both good and evil. The healing practices involve any type of healing ritual using local bushes and natural remedies, falling outside of established conventional medicine. Witchcraft involves the invoking of evil spirits, or warding off the evil set by others.[812] Lenwin Williams describes obeah as a form of superstition practiced in the Caribbean, as the consciousness of certain connectionism that exists among all facets of life and the interaction between the natural and supernatural.[813] As the superstitions shared by the participants is primarily to ward off the spirit of the deceased, and with its interplay between the natural and supernatural, it appears to have its roots in this form of Jamaican obeah.

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[810] For example: A bowl filled with salt or sugar are placed on a table or on the side for the libations of rum to be poured as an offering to the deceased spirit. Babies and small children of the deceased parent are passed over the bier, so that the deceased spirit does not molest the child. When the spouse dies, the surviving partner tears a new white handkerchief in two, keeps one half and buries the other half with the deceased (usually placed in the hand of the deceased).

[811] Olive Senior, "Obeah," in Senior (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Jamaican Heritage*, pp.355-57.

[812] Margarite Fernandez-Olmos and Lizbeth Paravisini-Gerbert, *Creole Religions in the Caribbean: An Introduction from Voodoo and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), pp.131-140

[813] Lewin L. Williams, *The Caribbean: Enculturation, Acculturation and the Role of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996), pp.15-17.

Fernandez-Olmos and Paravisini-Gerbert also describe *myalism* or *myal* as a variation of obeah. Their similarities include skills in herbalism, healing aspects, and other objects for influencing behaviours, assuring protection, and reaching one's goals. However, myalism has a much more complex set of community rituals than obeah, which often involve singing, drumming, calling to spirits, and spirit possession.[814] According to Nathaniel Murrell, a scholar of Caribbean religion, 'myalism' incorporated African traditional practices, such as 'a dance ritual, and rites of passage rituals, and a pharmacopeia for herbal and spiritual healing'. These rites of passage would have included death rituals. Those who practiced myalism did so 'for the healing of personal and community ills' both of which had physical and spiritual dimensions.[815] Therefore, what is described as superstitious practices amongst some of the British Caribbean participants may simple be retentions from these obeah and *myal* practices as a response to dealing with death.

The Caribbean historian, Shirley Gordon, also points out that *revivalism*, an indigenous Jamaican religion, was the product of the fusion of myalism and Christianity.[816] Revivalism was a result of the influence of Moses Bake and George Liele, African American Baptists, who brought the gospel to the free and enslaved blacks of Jamaica. According to Edmonds and Gonzalez, the Great Revival of 1860 in Jamaica was initially ignited by the great evangelical North American revival of 1857-58, which began in the United States and went on to affect a great portion of the Western World including the Caribbean. In Jamaica, private homes became holy meeting places for public prayer and Bible reading with their emphasis on prayer, conviction of sin and repentance. There were also records of unusual manifestations,

[814] Fernandez-Olmos and Paravisini-Gerbert, *Creole Religions in the Caribbean*, pp.135-140.
[815] Nathaniel S. Murrell, *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to Their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), p.251.
[816] Gordon, *God Almighty Make Me Free*, p.129.

prostrations, trembling, and displays of emotion, as well as the resurgence of counterfeit Christianity among a minority. Thus, the Great Revival resulted in the emergence of several African-derived religions (like Obeah) and Afro-Christian religions (like revivalism).[817] The Methodist theologian George Mulrain argued that the Caribbean culture in general is primarily an oral one which is evident with revivalism. As a result, theology was not limited to activities conducted in places of worship and administered by spiritual leaders (like normative theologies) or seminaries (similar to 'formal theologies'). Instead, theology was found in the experiences of everyday life and was an activity in which everyone could participate regardless of their educational qualification or economic status (similar to 'ordinary theologies').[818] Therefore, within this cultural context, ordinary theologies are the authoritative theological voices which drive these superstitious practices of ordinary people.

George Simpson, an American sociologist and anthropologist who researches mainly on religions of the Caribbean, suggests that revivalism's belief that after death the soul of an individual returns to God for judgment was similar to the eschatological beliefs expressed within classical Pentecostalism.[819] The Caribbean scholar Horace Russell in his discussion about Pentecostal mission in the Caribbean points out that as Pentecostalism became part of the Jamaican religious landscape, eschatology continued to play a significant role in its growth. For many of the sanctified believers, it became the constant reminder to live sanctified lives - for the second coming of Christ could occur at any time. The imminent return of Jesus also become the impetus to engage in local evangelism.[820]

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[817] Edmonds and Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History*, p.126.
[818] George Mulrain, "Caribbean," in John Parratt (ed.), *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.164-165.
[819] George E. Simpson, "Jamaican Revivalist Cults," *Social and Economic Studies* 5, no.4 (1956) p.346.
[820] Russell, *The Missionary Outreach of the West Indian Church*.

The Caribbean theologian Dale Bisnauth notes that in the nineteenth century some Caribbean slaves relied on spiritual mediation of *myalmen* who seem to have been the Caribbean counterpart of the West African priest (Akan: okomfo). Bisnauth points out that before myalmen were exposed to the influence of Christianity, they received inspiration from the world of African spirits. While it was only in Jamaica that such priests were called 'myalmen', such men were found throughout the Caribbean.[821] The myalmen of western Jamaica in the 1840s claimed to be possessed by the Holy Spirit expressly for the purpose of combatting obeahmen, who they asserted where under the influence of Satan. Bisnauth argues that revivalism has assimilated more Christian elements over the years, and that this assimilation has retained elements of African traditional beliefs.[822] Revivalist practices relating to death integrate the influences of both African retentions and Christian beliefs. Thus, after a person has died it is believed that on the third night, the soul or spirit following the pattern of Christ's resurrection on the third day, is resurrected. On the ninth night, the spirit of the dead returns to its former home. Thus, on the ninth night, a service of remembrance is held at which the departed soul is admonished to continue to serve God.[823] This is likely where the Caribbean nine-night ritual originates from.

The Caribbean scholar of religion, Arthur Dayfoot, points out that many people who had accepted Christianity were still concerned about controlling the evil spirits which affect human life. He argues that these traditions embraced a spiritual worldview that denies the distinction of sacred and secular, associates every experience with religious practice.[824] Dayfoot also

[821] Bisnauth, *The History of Religions in the Caribbean*, p. 177
[822] Bisnauth, *The History of Religions in the Caribbean*, p. 178,
[823]Bisnauth, *The History of Religions in the Caribbean*, p.179.
[824] Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church*, pp.184-185.

points out that 'obeah' and 'myalism' are a retention of African traditional religion which came to the West Indies through transatlantic slavery.[825]

According to Anderson, African traditional 'healers' often used material symbols like water, ashes, ropes and whips to ward off evil spirits.[826] One of the common symbols is cords and strings tied in various places of the body to obtain healing and ward off evil. These cords can be of different colours, have a traditional significance and are sometimes linked with the ancestors. The person would usually tie the cords in the places where the healing or protection is needed the most.[827] Therefore, the British Caribbean ritual of placing a tape measure on the internal door frame of the house of the deceased, and even for widows who wear red underwear, appear to be a retention of this African traditional ritual. Ferdinando points out that while ancestors are generally benevolent beings they can have malevolent tendencies as, 'they are a constant threat, punishing breaches of tradition and taboo as well as any failure to render them appropriate honour'. [828] Similarly, Ogbu Kalu describes the traditional African worldview of a family who believes if they fail to provide a decent burial for a dead relative, the spirit of a dead person will visit them to cause strife and make demands.[829] Therefore, superstitions appear to be retentions of ATR practiced by British Caribbeans in order to ward off dead spirits that have the possibility of affecting their lives.

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[825] Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church,* p.184.
[826] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* pp.121-122.
[827] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.161.
[828] Keith Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), p.48.
[829] Kalu Ogbu, "Preserving a Worldview: Pentecostalism in the African Maps of the Universe," *Pneuma,* Vol 24:2 (2002), pp.110-137 (119-120).

Interestingly, none of the superstitions expressed by the British Caribbean participants were shared by the British African participants in their focus group. However, the British African participants do have their own superstitions as shared by this participant:

> In Nigeria, parents would not attend the burial of their children if they outlive their children. Also, we try to keep the news from the parents until after the burial because sometimes hearing it may kill them...but in England they do attend.[830]

This was the only superstition shared by the participants from RCCG but in general there where limited experiences shared about traditional death rituals.

With regard to possible meanings and motives, Williams explains that members of Caribbean churches turn elsewhere for spiritual healing because some of the extra-colonial religious forms like *obeah* can offer some practical solutions beyond those offered by Christianity. He points out that none of the contexts from which the colonised immigrants were brought into the Caribbean promoted separation between religions on the one hand and day-to-day living on the other.[831] Therefore, Pentecostalism does not appear to entirely meet the spiritual needs of those in this study who seek a form of spirituality that integrates their religion with their philosophy of life. Dayfoot explains that in the nineteenth century, the beliefs and practices from African traditional religion were syncretized into many of the black Caribbean churches.[832] In *The African Folklore Encyclopaedia,* Daniel Avorgbedor gives various examples of syncretism with the combining of different beliefs with African Christianity. He argues that although syncretism has served important analytical goals, it falls short of explaining the dynamic and active negotiations associated with ritual and general performance culture in

[830] V27 of RCCG (2) Focus Group.
[831]Williams, *The Caribbean*, p.17.
[832] Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church,* pp.190-191.

African independent churches.[833] Mbiti argues that many African peoples today have a 'mixed' religious heritage and try to reconcile traditional religions with Abrahamic faiths.[834] Similarly, many of British Caribbean Pentecostals appear to have a 'mixed' religious heritage and have tried to reconcile these superstitions with Christianity.

In his study, Anderson discusses the continuity between African traditional healing and methods of healing in South African churches. He points out that by distinguishing between the form of healing *practices*, which might indeed resemble the diviner's methods, and their *content,* which is often opposed to traditional practices, the real meaning of those practices is discovered.[835] For Anderson: 'Pentecostalism proclaims a holistic salvation, which embraces not only the theoretical concept of the soul, but also the practical here-and-now expression of salvation as healing from sickness and deliverance from all types of evil and misfortune.'[836]

In this research, I did not find anyone who thought that the superstitious rituals pointed to the power of God.[837] The symbols used in most of the death rituals are believed to have intrinsic power in themselves. Harold Turner points out that Christians throughout the world sometimes attach supernatural interpretations to symbols so that the original meaning has changed. Therefore, British Caribbean participants may observe certain rituals because they have become traditions of the community and not because they really understand their symbolic significance.

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[833] Daniel Avorgbedor, "Music: Musical Innovation in African Independent Churches," in Philip M. Peek; Kwesi Yankah (eds.), *African Folklore: An Encyclopaedia* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.541-542.
[834] Mbiti, *Introduction to African religion*, pp.116-118.
[835] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.165.
[836] Anderson, *Spirit-filled World,* p.131.
[837] Perhaps the 23rd or 27th Psalm being read out loud and being left open in the room at the respective passage. To some of the participants this particular ritual would not be considered as superstition as it invokes the power of Holy Spirit.

6.7 Conclusion

For a more developed ecclesiology, Pentecostals should look to Hunston's 'Spirit ecclesiology' which places the central importance of Pentecostal worship as people being led by the Spirit rather than relying on formal settings or liturgy.[838] This concept recognises that for most Pentecostals, worship *acts* would be regarded as more sacred than the worship *spaces.* This also means that the Spirit constitutes the church, giving gatherings like nine-nights its unique identity as a Spirit-filled body.

In general, there appears to be both continuity and discontinuity of Jamaican folk religion and ATR with nine-nights and superstitions related to Caribbean death rites. Some forms of obeah and myalism seem to be reflected in the worldview of some of the participants in this research even though there is both continuity and discontinuity. None of the participants acknowledged or seemed to be aware of the retentions of African or Jamaican traditional religion in their practices. Lindhardt makes the point that it is highly relevant to ask what certain ritual experiences mean to participants and how such experiences become meaningful, being open to the possibility that they mean different things to different people.[839] Therefore, it is possible that nine-nights and the various superstitions discussed here mean different things to British Caribbean's to what they originally intended. Nassehi's concept of the 'culturalization of religion' and Grab's idea of 'religious communication', referred to earlier in the thesis, help us

[838] R. Hunston, "Church-the Body of Christ," in Brewster (ed.), *Pentecostal Doctrine*, pp.139-48 (147).
[839] Lindhardt (ed.), *Practicing the Faith,* p.13.

to interpret death rituals as religious to give meaning to the experiences, even if they do not take themselves to be religious *per se.*

There seem to be inherent inadequacies in elements of Pentecostalism so that it does not always provide ultimately satisfying solutions for people in trouble, particularly for people who are bereaved. Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the omnipotent Holy Spirit who fills people with power, which ought to be the main source of healing from troublesome deceased spirits, should be more than adequate but the question remains why for some this divine power is insufficient.

Just like experiences relating to community with the dead, Pentecostal churches and leaders have by and large diabolised superstition, despite it being commonly experienced within black Pentecostal communities. Ordinary theologies of death need to be developed to help Pentecostals reconcile the folk religion within a biblically informed Pentecostal theology, thereby yielding new pathways for the inculturation of Christianity in the Pentecostal context. In the meantime, there remains tension between normative Pentecostal theology and the ordinary theology of many laity who appear to practice these forms of folk religion.

CHAPTER 7

MULTI-VOICES DIALOGUE RELATING TO FUNERAL RITUALS

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will be analysing data solicited primarily from the 'operant' and 'espoused' voices as a continuation from the previous chapter. In this case the empirical data has been gathered from the observations of four funeral services I attended during the field research. As three of the funerals were held at a Black Majority Church (BMC) and one at a White Led Church (WLC) most of my analysis focuses on Black funerals. This chapter will explore the funeral services and other rites which mark the transition of the deceased and is divided into three main sections. The first section will begin with an introduction to liturgy and then discuss various aspects of Pentecostal funeral liturgy. The second section will examine selected funeral rites in the context of this research which include the rites of prayer, praise and worship together with the rites of burials and cremations. The last section will examine memorial rites and I will also discuss how selected Pentecostal funerals have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

7.2 Introduction to liturgy

According to Frank Senn, the word 'liturgy' is not strictly religious in origin. It comes from the classical Greek word *leitourgia* meaning public work. As a religious phenomenon Senn describes liturgy as a communal response to the sacred activity reflecting practice, thanksgiving, supplication and repentance. He also notes that the apostle Paul uses the term 'liturgy' in 2 Corinthians 9:12 to designate the voluntary effect of gathering an offering for the

poor from his congregation.[840] Douglas Davis defines liturgy as the formal expression of how theologically we make sense of life and that would include in the context of this research how we make sense of death.[841]

The Pentecostal theologian, Wolfgang Vondey, notes that while the diverse liturgical environment in general has been widely studied, little attention has been paid to the liturgical development of classical Pentecostalism.[842] Therefore, in this research attention has been focused on a range of funeral liturgical activity which forms the basis of Pentecostal theologies of death.

According to Hunston, in classical Pentecostal worship services, clergy and laity tend not to rely heavily on written liturgy.[843] Similarly, Senn notes that one distinctive aspect of Pentecostalism is the absence of written liturgy and the focus on the oral tradition. Senn acknowledges that liturgy includes the activities of gathering for worship and interaction that may not be written down.[844] According to Cheryl Johns, oral-narratives reflect distinctive practices in the Pentecostal community and allows for the Pentecostal 'story' to be integrated with the life experiences of the participant which gives a 'voice' to every believer.[845] In contrast Pentecostal funeral services seem to diverge slightly from this 'oral' tradition. As we have seen, all the larger Pentecostal denominations in this research (COGOP, NTCOG, EPC, AOG, and RCCG) have published official manuals for their ministers which include funeral liturgy. For example, NTCOG has published a *Minister's Service Manual* which contains a section for

[840] Frank C. Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), p.5.
[841] Douglas Davies, *The Theology of Death* (London: T&T Clark, *2008),* p.58.
[842] Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), p.109, 118-119.
[843] R. Hunston, "Church-the Body of Christ," in Brewster (ed.), *Pentecostal Doctrine*, pp.139-48 (147).
[844] Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*, p.6.
[845] Johns, *Pentecostal Formation,* p.87.

funerals that includes guidelines for what ministers need to do before, during and after a funeral. It also has an outline of order of services for different types of funeral services together with suggested bible readings and written prayers.[846] COGOP has a similar section in their *Ministers Pocket Manual.*[847] Pentecostal written liturgy for funerals are also contained in the form of written order of services (or service programmes) distributed to all funeral attendees. However, during the funerals I observed, rather than using this liturgy rigidly, the order of service contains a written liturgy which allowed for flexibility within the service.

7.3 Ritual modes of sensibility

In addition to the rituals of worship, Albrecht refers to 'ritual modes of sensibility' as the attitudes which shape Pentecostals' engagement with the various rites. He distinguishes the following modes of ritual sensibility within Pentecostal services: celebration, contemplation of transcendental efficacy, penitent/purgation, ecstasy, improvisation, and ceremony.[848] The modes of celebration and contemplation are the most relevant in the context of funerals.

During my observations, the celebrative mode of the service was demonstrated in each funeral service. The order of services of two of the funerals prefaced with the description 'Celebrating the life of…'. The celebratory mode of Pentecostal funerals was also underlined by the pastor of Elim (Staffs):

> I think that the close family will always be bereaved and mourning but the theme of celebration is a good thing to have within the service. For the Christian, we believe that being 'absent from the body is being present with the Lord' which does give incredible comfort. We also need to mark with respect the influence that the person had and the

[846] Buxton, *Minister Service Manual*, pp. 113-127.
[847] Sutton, *Minister's Pocket Manual.*
[848] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, p.179.

> way they have lived their lives. Therefore, that becomes a sense of the worthiness of the person's life being celebrated.[849]

According to Hugh James, life-centred funerals seek to affirm the deceased life by celebrating the life of the deceased rather than a focus on the spiritual journey of the deceased in the next life.[850] Pentecostal funerals would not necessarily be described as 'life centred' because although Pentecostals are celebrating the life of the deceased there still remains an important focus on their spiritual journey within a Christian framework.

At the funerals I attended, a mode of 'contemplative sensibility' emerged at particular junctures of the service, one of which was during the 'viewing' of the body in an open casket at the end of the service.[851] During the viewing time space appeared to be given to the bereaved for contemplative reflection on the deceased person. The closely bereaved appeared to have a sharpened sense regarding the physical mortality of the deceased as there were more outbursts of crying during the viewing. In the Handsworth Church focus group some believed that sometimes the casket would remain closed because the physical state of the deceased when they died may be too unpleasant to view. Some believed that there are times people want you to remember the deceased individual as he or she was. Others thought that the family should be given a choice as to whether the casket should be open or closed irrespective of the condition of the corpse.[852]

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[849] Interview, Pastor of Elim (Staffs).
[850] James, *A Fitting End,* p.51.
[851] A 'viewing' is where the casket is opened by the funeral directors at the end to show the upper body of the corpse. The congregation are given instructions on how to 'file pass' the casket to view the body. The close family are then given the opportunity to have the last viewing at the end which is when they tend to express their grief. This tradition is often practiced in British Caribbean funerals.
[852] V3 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.

In view of the lack of critical discussion by Pentecostal scholars about Pentecostal liturgy in the context of funeral services, the Anglican tradition which has a range of resources on liturgy for all types of worship services will be brought into dialogue. Anne Holton notes that for the Church of England, the written liturgical structure of the funeral service is based on the journey of the soul from the earthly to the heavenly. It begins with celebrating the humanity of the dead person and moves towards thinking about heaven in the prayers of commendation and committal.[853] According to Holton, the *Book of Common Prayer* has given theological meaning and spiritual comfort to many facing death and bereavement. However, it placed little importance on the individuality of the deceased and more emphasis upon sin, and divine mercy after life and judgement.[854] In contrast, the new *Common Worship* services provided additional contemporary liturgy in the modern context for funeral ministry which has become more *life-centred*.[855] Similarly, the Pentecostal churches in this research have followed Anglicans with their shift towards 'celebration of life' funerals. However, there are still several aspects of Pentecostal funerals which remain distinct from other Christian traditions which will be further examined.

7.4 Performance of liturgy

Following my attendance at a funeral at Elim (B'ham), I wrote in my field notes:

> The procession at the start of the service consisted of the casket of the deceased being wheeled to the front of the church where it remained closed throughout the service. One of the funeral directors was walking at the front of it and the family was walking in behind it. The coffin was made of white wood and had a yellow and white wreath full of flowers on top. During the procession a song was being played in the background

[853] Horton, *Using Common Worship Funerals*, pp.4-7.
[854] Horton, *Using Common Worship Funerals*, p.7; Church of England, *The Common Book of Prayer*.
[855] Church of England, *Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church Publishing House, 2000).

> which was a contemporary version of 'Yes Jesus loves me'. When the casket was left at the front of the church, it remained closed.[856]

This funeral rite at the beginning of the service is called 'the procession'. Thomas Long suggests that the procession symbolises the deceased taking his or her place in the assembly of worship.[857] Davies points out that funeral rites are meant to demonstrate the journey of the deceased person from this early life to the next life which culminates at the committal.[858] This journey is vividly displayed during the procession. However, if the soul of the deceased person is in the process of the journey to the next life this 'belief' appears to contradict Pentecostal 'normative' theology which asserts that the soul or spirit leaves the body immediately upon death.[859] Therefore, Pentecostals should recognise that the body that is being carried in the procession and left in front of the church to view is not really the deceased person or their spirit but simply a dead corpse or shell.

According to Paul Hiebert *et al*, rituals acquire status not only because they conform to spiritual realities at a deep level but also because they have a *performance* element.[860] This means rather than demonstrating a perceived reality of normative theology the procession is re-enacting the journey of the deceased soul as a form of performance liturgy. According to Long, a Christian funeral is essentially a piece of religious drama. In fact, you could describe many of the funeral rites as religious theatre that interweave several levels of performance or drama into a coherent, comprehensive, whole funeral service. Most acts of Christian worship are intrinsically a form of drama or liturgical theatre which intertwines the two narratives of the gospel story and the

[856] Field notes for Funeral observation at Elim (B'ham).
[857] Long, *Accompanying them with Singing*, p.157.
[858] Davis, *Theologies of Death*, pp.61-62.
[859] See chapter 5.
[860] Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, p.290.

story of the deceased.[861] Davies suggests that with this symbolic density, this particular ritual still has great power to move people's emotions and affirm their understanding of the resurrection.[862] From my observations of Pentecostal funeral services, it appears that the belief in the resurrection was re-enacted in a dramatic form in an attempt to show that it is not the end, but a transition into the presence of God.

Richard McCall points out in his study of liturgy as performance that the clericalisation and sacramentalisation of liturgical action illustrates the separation of church and drama in the modern world. From the Renaissance forward, the enactment by the priesthood on behalf of the laity became the principal form of impersonation in the liturgy.[863] McCall argues that the twentieth century inherited two dominant liturgical approaches, one portraying the liturgy as a faithful performance of doctrine, the other seeing doctrine as emerging fundamentally from the performance of liturgy.[864] Pentecostals tend to portray the liturgy as a performance of doctrine; although it can be questioned how accurately this drama reflects normative doctrine.

David Torevell argues that the enforcement of a uniform enactment of drama in isolation from other social and cultural phenomena, has led to a separation of the liturgy from the context of human life in general. Furthermore, the distinction between clergy and laity in the participation of the liturgical performances disconnected Christian rituals from the corporeal and subjective experience of the faithful.[865] From my observations I do not necessarily agree that Pentecostal funeral liturgical performances disconnected the funeral rituals from the bereaved

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[861] Long, *Accompanying them with Singing*, pp.77-78.
[862] Douglas Davis, *Death, Ritual & Belief: The Rhetoric of Funeral Rites* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.8.
[863] Richard McCall, *Do This: Liturgy as Performance* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p.15.
[864] Richard D. McCall, "Liturgical Theopoetic: The Acts of God in the Act of liturgy," *WCILR* Vol 71.5 (1997): pp.339-401; Trevor A. Hart and Steven R. Guthrie (eds.), *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
[865] David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity, and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), pp.80-115.

congregation. Whilst observing the procession during the funerals on each occasion the congregation stood as the casket was carried into the church by the pallbearers and appeared to respond to the importance of the performance. The congregation also appeared to connect with the journey of the deceased soul being 'carried' into the next life.

Vondey argues that the Pentecostal approach to the theology of play represents the most fruitful contribution of Pentecostalism towards global Christianity.[866] Jean-Jacques Suurmond describes Pentecostal liturgy as 'liberation for eschatological play'. This liturgy fundamentally intends to encompass all areas of the life of faith and opens the church to participate in the eschatological kingdom of God.[867] Similarly, Amos Yong suggests that the playground of liturgy can be enlarged where 'the Holy Spirit transforms the community of faith from moment to moment so that it can more fully realize and embody here and now the image and likeness of the eschatological Christ.'[868] Therefore, the issue in Pentecostal liturgy is not adherence to a specific order of rites but the congregation's holistic involvement and the playful engagement with the divine presence leading to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the ritual process.

Bobby Alexander, who focused his study on Pentecostal resistance to established ritual structures, suggests that a revision of ritual structures should begin by abandoning the theoretical reference frame of structural-functional theory that makes ritual activity dependent on doctrine rather than granting it theological status. From Alexander's perspective, Pentecostal liturgy consists of rites that induce a liminal, anti-structural environment in which

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[866] Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, pp.109, 118-119.
[867] Jean-Jacques Suurmond, "The Church at Play: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal of the liturgy as Renewal of the World," in Jan A. B Jongeneel (ed.) *et al*, *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays on Intercultural Theology* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992), pp.251-252.
[868] Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, p.161.

liturgy is open to playful invention of new behaviour, freedom of expression and spontaneity.[869] It appears to be the participation in rituals rather than the understanding of rituals that forms the foundational moment for articulating ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death.

The expansive and transformative nature of play, which Brian Sutton-Smith has called its 'adaptive variability', should be understood as the adaptiveness of play which consists of the potential to transform existing structural contexts.[870] From my observations, the funerals consisted of liturgy which was open to playful worship, spontaneity and freedom of expression in the Spirit but it remained within a Christian framework during the church service. There are also distinctive aspects of performance liturgy within a *black* church context which will be explored further.

7.5 Funeral liturgy within a black church context

According to Robert Beckford, the hallmarks of black Pentecostalism in Britain include a unique experience of God and a dynamic spirituality.[871] From my field research, in the midst of diversity of the bereaved community there was a sense that the mourners recognised their gathering as a 'black' funeral because of this unique worship experience. However, the hallmarks, traditions and customs of black funerals are often evident throughout the black communities in Britain irrespective of religious affiliations. One of the hallmarks of black traditions and customs in black worship settings is the dramatising of liturgy. The black theologian, Anthony Reddie, in his book *Dramatising Theologies* uses an action-reflection approach in the form of drama as a method for inculcating black theological ideas and

[869] Bobby C. Alexander, "Correcting Misinterpretations of Turner's Theory: An African-American Pentecostal Illustration," *JSSR* Vol 30, no. 1 (1991), pp.32-41.
[870] Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.229.
[871] Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal*, p.171.

concerns.[872] He regards the process of performative action as a means of deconstructing and constructing black theological themes within the framework of drama.[873] Similarly, in this research certain aspects of liturgy within black funerals have deconstructed and constructed theologies of death themes, within the framework of drama. One of the themes examined by the black theologian Carol Tomlin, is *preaching*. Tomlin describes preaching in BMCs as a form of performance liturgy which are largely African linguistic retentions. She explains the features comprised within black preaching which include 'folk sermons', improvisation, the creative use of language and physical movements as a dramatic presentation.[874] This style of preaching was evident during the black funerals I observed which appear to help the preacher connect the message to the congregation.

The three black funerals I observed were British Caribbean rather than African funerals. There was a recognition by most of the Caribbean participants that black funerals were a public community event. From the Caribbean perspective, Fernando Henriques observed that in Jamaican death rituals, as soon as death occurred, relatives far and wide would be notified and their attendance was considered almost mandatory because, 'the funeral serves a dual purpose; it enables kin who have not met for years to renew bonds of friendship and serves to emphasise the loss by death to this group in the society'.[875] On the basis of the British Caribbean funerals I observed, not much appears to have changed. When death occurs, it affects not only the immediate family but the whole community which becomes a ritual community. For Vizedom, to speak of a ritual community demands social cohesion which is often solidified by a shared

[872] Anthony G. Reddie, *Dramatizing Theologies: A Participative Approach to Black God-talk* (London: Equinox, 2006), p.129.
[873] Reddie, *Dramatizing Theologies,* pp.157-160.
[874] Carol Tomlin, *Preach it! Understanding African Caribbean Preaching* (London: SCM Press, 2019), pp. 83-104.
[875] Fernando Henriques, *Family and Colour in Jamaica* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953), p.13.

belief.[876] According to Sheppy, one of the pre-conditions for ritual coherence is the existence of a community with common understandings and traditions and values about life and death, and about what the rite is.[877] In black funerals social cohesion appears to be also solidified by shared traditions and local cultural customs. The family members of the deceased welcome anyone who is related or connected to the deceased or to the bereaved family to be part of the ritual community. For the closely bereaved participation in the death rituals appeared to be quite purposeful and endured from the moment of the death of the departed until after the funeral service. For others, participation is temporary and minimal, particularly if they only attend the church funeral service, but it can still be a strong emotional union as a result of the shared loss and the church fellowship helps to enhance solidarity and creates a community of mourners.

When I attended the funeral held by the white majority church TEC, the funeral service was held at the crematorium. I observed that there were about 15 to 20 people in attendance consisting of close family and friends and the service lasted about 25 minutes. The deceased was not a member of the church but connected to a member of the church. The operant theology from this funeral observation appear to converge with formal theologies which reveal that white English bereaved families tend to regard funerals as a *private* event. In his book *Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*, Geoffrey Gorer ascribed to death, for the white British, a taboo status similar to that previously accorded to pornography. Paul Sheppy also argues that in British culture, there has been a gradual dissolution of the community of faith and religious belief has largely been privatised. He suggests that a vibrant sense of community

[876] M. B Vizedom, *Rites and Relationships: Rites of Passage and Contemporary Anthropology*, Sage Research paper in Social Sciences (Cross-Cultural Studies Series) Vol 4, (London 1976) pp.24-26
[877] Paul P. Sheppy, *Liturgy and Death: An examination of the pastoral and theological issues relating to funerals with special reference to selected funeral rites* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1994), p.17.

is much diminished in contemporary Britain.[878] However, this view seems to represent the culture of white communities Britain. In contrast, this research has shown that the black communities in Britain have always treated funerals as public events.

The scholar of African American religion, Diana Hayes, suggests that this 'ritual community' created by black communities at the time of death is a continuation of ATR. She argues that in most parts of Africa there is a vital relationship between the life of the individual and that of his or her community. She argues that Africans have a meaningful existence only to the extent that they participate in community and transmit life.[879] Therefore, individualism as it has developed in British mainstream society is unthinkable because an African is defined by his or her community and the roles that the community sets before him or her. There appears to be a retention of this African communal culture amongst British Caribbeans who appear to embrace funeral gatherings as a communal affair in which the whole community feels the grief of the bereaved and shares it.

According to Vondey, the construction of a broader support for a black basis of Pentecostal liturgy is based on the premise that Pentecostal origins are deeply connected with African spirituality. It is Vondey's hypothesis that African spirituality was carried to North America by African slaves which produced a new liturgical form shaped by the social, cultural and religious conditions of the new environment.[880] In his study of slave theology, Hopkins points out that the orientation toward the ultimate freedom of life in the Spirit profoundly shaped early African

[878] Sheppy, *Liturgy and Death*, p.17.
[879] Diana L. Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012), pp.16-17.
[880] Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), pp.127 -128.

American liturgy, which was greatly impacted by the slave work ethic.[881] Another scholar of African American religion, Charles Joyner, adds that African folk religion was based on an oral tradition process, centred on narratives, songs, plays, and other forms of communication that preserved the story of the slaves and their values and rituals.[882] During my field research, I observed that the worship of the bereaved was still centred on the oral tradition and in particular the stories of the deceased shared by the family and friends during the tributes. These tributes also centred on narratives and songs that preserved the memory of the deceased.

It was evident that the funeral services I observed provided an open, often improvised, and unrehearsed liturgy shared by both clergy and laity, who often expressed this spiritual liberty from the pulpit. Dale Andrews who brings a pneumatological perspective to African American folk religion points out that the presence of the Holy Spirit provided an 'open arrangement' of unrehearsed liturgy which emerged out of a sense of spiritual liberty. The pneumatological imagination, and the broad array of kinaesthetic responses to the spiritual awareness of God's presence emerged from the African antecedents.[883] Similarly, in my observations although there were service programmes made available at the funeral services for the congregation, the Spirit was an important source of Pentecostal liturgy enabling a free response by participants to the encounter with God.

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[881] Dwight N. Hopkins, "Slave Theology in the Invisible Institution," in D.N. Hopkins and George C. L Cummings (eds.), *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narrative,* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003), pp. 1-7.
[882] Charles Joyner, "'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity," in Paul E. Johnson (ed.) *African-American Christianity: Essays in History,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp.25-36.
[883] Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville; Westminster/John Knox, 2002), pp.34-37.

7.6 'Home-going' funerals

The African-American theologian, Janice McClean-Farrell, in her exploration of the cultural context of the religious West Indian immigrant communities, argues that West Indians utilised their ethnic and religious resources and used their cultural heritage as a template for adapting to the new context.[884] As a result many members of the Caribbean diaspora discovered their original voices that allowed them to articulate how to express themselves uniquely in the face of death, particularly in the form of 'home-going' funeral services.

During my field research, two out of three of the BMC order of services described the funeral services as 'home-going' services. According to Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, 'home-going' in the context of death has its roots in ATR where during the death rituals the soul begins its journey to the spirit world to ensure that the deceased secured a place in the company of the ancestors.[885] Hayes regards rituals within ATR as acts of invoking and communicating with God and the ancestors. She argues that the aim of most rituals is to help the people with their problems, and to make sense of the interaction between the spiritual and material worlds to bring harmony.[886] Frey and Wood also note that for African slaves brought to North America from the 1600s, when they died, many believed that the deceased's soul returned to their African homeland.[887]

During the funerals observed in this research, the ritual expression of death as a journey was evident in the rich symbolism integrated into the funeral services albeit within a Christian

[884] Janice A. McLean-Farrell, *West Indian Pentecostals: Living their faith in New York and London* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2016), p.84.
[885] Sylvia R. Frey & Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism: The American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (London: The University of North Caroline Press, 1998), pp.23-24.
[886] Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality*, pp.22-23.
[887] Frey & Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, p.51.

framework. The 'home-going' services, which survive today amongst many British Caribbeans, were not regarded by my research participants as the deceased soul joining with their ancestors. Instead they spoke of the funeral as a 'home-going' as a metaphor to articulate the Christian resurrection message that the departed soul is journeying to their home to be with the Lord in heaven.

Another feature of a 'home-going' service is the elaborate nature of the funeral as expressed in the following exchange with the pastor of the West Bromwich Church, a majority British Caribbean church:

> Culturally we like to put on a big show [spending a lot of money on the funeral] to show that we are not poor, but we are rich until the very end. I think that there is a level of competitiveness and people wanting to go out in style and not leaving this earth in poverty…They do say that they want a good 'send-off' and a good send-off means lavish, spend all the money on me, and anything that is left over is for the family.[888]

I also observed that black Pentecostal death rituals are elaborate with considerable ritual and splendour. For example, two of the Caribbean funerals I attended consisted of coffins which were white and lined with silver trimmings. Also, the hearse and the other vehicles that carried the families were stretch limousines. During the focus group sessions, a few of the Caribbean participants also shared that many of the deceased used horse and white carriages to carry their loved ones.

The expressiveness of British Caribbean 'home-going' funerals appears to have been influenced by funeral rituals in Jamaica. The West Indian social scientist, Annie Paul, in her examination of death rituals in postcolonial Jamaica, makes the point that elaborate

[888] Interview, Pastor of the West Bromwich Church.

preparations are made for the funeral while waiting for family and friends to assemble around the family home. She adds that:

> The coffin or casket in particular acquires the expressiveness of a status symbol signifying the importance both of the deceased and the bereaved family or community. Often disproportionate amounts of money are invested by poor communities in custom-made designer caskets.[889]

It raises questions about the desire for majesty and splendour on the part of ordinary British Jamaicans to 'die well' or have 'a good send-off'. Paul refers to the excessive pomp in which Jamaican celebrities conduct their funerals.[890] However, a case can be made for adopting a different perspective by regarding the coffin as more than just a container. Although he was not talking specifically about black funerals, Douglas Davies points out that there is an intrinsic value of a casket encasing a deceased loved one as it contains, as well as the status of the deceased, a reflection of the values of the family, church and community.[891] Similarly, Obika Gray takes a more positive view of the expressiveness of black funerals by claiming that they are a demonstration of the practices of freedom signalling the 'social power of the urban poor' and the presence of a 'rebellious counter-society' in post-colonial Jamaica.[892] Therefore, extravagant British Caribbean funerals may not simply be a status symbol but a desire to 'die well' to counter the economic struggles many British Caribbeans face during their life-time. Therefore, what was previously seen as idiosyncratic in the black community has now become the norm.

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[889] Annie Paul, "No Grave Cannot hold my Body Down: Rituals of Death and Burial in Postcolonial Jamaica," *Small Axe* Vol 11.2 (June 2007) pp.142 – 162 (143).
[890] Paul, "No Grave Cannot hold my Body Down," pp.143-151.
[891] Douglas Davis, *Theologies of Death*, p.24.
[892] Obika Gray, *Demeaned but Empowered: The Social Power of the Urban Poor in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaican: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), p.186.

Michael Jagessar argues that many traditional practices and customs have been appropriated by the African and Caribbean diaspora through a process of *inculturation.* According to Jagessar, there is evidence of inculturation of death rituals in the black Pentecostal communities which is the process of intentionally bringing elements of one culture into another culture.[893] Such religious adaptation is indicative of the ways in which black people creatively express their religiosity by borrowing and replicating beliefs and practices on their terms. According to McClean-Farrell, many in the West Indian community in North America, root themselves in the heritage of the West Indian culture of their churches or their wider community. She suggests that West Indian Pentecostals often participate in several cultures simultaneously which includes an American culture, an ethnic culture, family culture and a Pentecostal culture.[894] In British Caribbean funerals, several identities were also being constructed. These included one that oriented them towards the Caribbean homes of their parents, a black British identity that grounded them in their context of the UK and one which identifies them with the indigenous white British society. However, even with the influence of African American and West Indian rituals, 'home-going services' remain distinctive in African Caribbean culture and are a unique, but diverse part of British culture. In my view, home-going services display the diverse richness of Black culture but at the same time the expressiveness of certain aspects of this ritual may have an adverse effect on some of the bereaved as the following section demonstrates.

[893] Michael Jagessar and Steven Burns, "Liturgical Studies and Christian Worship: The post-colonial challenge," *Black Theological Journal*, Vol 2 (2007), pp. 39-62.
[894] McLean-Farrell, *West Indian Pentecostals*, p.153.

7.7 The theology of suffering and healing

One common feature of the funerals I observed was that most of the grieving was quite subdued, even by the close family. These two participants at the Handsworth Church, a BMC, shared their views:

> V30 – One thing I used to see in funerals is that there used to be a lot more crying. Nowadays you are restricted from crying as if you cannot show any emotions which I think is very sad.
>
> LR – Why do you think you are restricted?
>
> V30 – You would often hear people say to people who start crying: "Oh don't cry" as if crying is an embarrassment. That is the thing I don't like. If your love one has passed away, I think you are entitled to cry. How are you going to release your feelings if you don't cry? Every funeral is different, there is no set way or set ritual.
>
> V31 – I think a lot more people wear sunglasses in funerals nowadays because they don't want to show their emotions.[895]

It is not clear whether the reason the bereaved do not want to show their emotions publicly is due to restraints they have placed on themselves or external factors. The comment from the following participant may provide some clues:

> I do agree with that, but I felt guilty grieving at my mum's funeral, and I had to remind myself that I was grieving for my loss not for her. As a Christian I felt really guilty, and she was the first person to die that was close to me. But I think it's great and we do celebrate the life, but we have to remember that we have still lost a person that was close to you.[896]

This participant felt that there ought to be space for the family to grieve for their loss, alongside the celebration of the life of the deceased. I observed that there is a tendency at Pentecostal funerals to see grieving and suffering as an inappropriate response to death. 'Home-going' services emphasise the importance of maintaining a jubilant and celebratory tone through the

[895] Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[896] V62 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.

service as well as presenting an image of prosperity and splendour. I observed that there was a tendency for the funeral services to encourage constant praise and adulation to God, which at times does not fit in with the dynamics of a funeral service with a corpse lying at the front of the church. It seems that the bereaved are not given space or encouraged to mourn their loves ones as it sits awkwardly in the context of a perceived belief that wellness and healing is available for all due to the Pentecostal theology of healing and prosperity.

Most of the official Statements of belief of the Pentecostal denominations in this research offer the hope of divine healing but refrain from expressing it as a guarantee. Two examples are:

> We believe that deliverance from sickness, by Divine Healing is provided for in the Atonement (AOG).[897]
>
> God's sovereign grace and mercy, through the atonement of Jesus Christ for all our sins and ultimately for all the consequences of sin, provides for the healing/salvation of our souls as well as our bodies in His work on Calvary (COGOP) [898]

According to Wright, Pentecostals believe in the possibility of divine healing as a legitimate expression of the Church even though not all Christians are actually healed.[899] Warrington also argues that there has been a developing recognition by Pentecostals that divine healing provides a pathway to spiritual, physical and emotional wholeness in their fullest sense. He points out that Pentecostals appropriate the concept of *shalom,* which is translated into English using terms such as completeness, soundness, peace, well-being and healing.[900] Therefore, the path to wholeness and healing in their fullest sense would include healing from grief. One possible outcome is that within the Pentecostal tradition, the bereaved are not encouraged to grieve as

[897] Assembles of God UK, "What we believe*",* https://www.aog.org.uk/about-us/what-we-believe, accessed 21 May 2018.
[898] Church of God of Prophecy (UK), "Our Doctrine", https://cogop.org.uk/doctrine/, accessed 4 January 2018.
[899] J Wright, "Profiles of Divine Healing: Third Wave Theology Compared with Classical Pentecostal Theology," *AJPS* Vol 5.2 (2002), pp.271-87 (286).
[900] K. Warrington, "James 5:14-18: Healing, Then and Now," *IRM,* Vol 95 (July/Oct. 2004), pp.346-67 (346-51).

grief is a type of suffering which is an antithesis of the doctrine of wholeness and healing embraced by Pentecostals.

In the case of the two RCCG pastors, they went even further by placing emphasis on minimising death through prayer and healing. For example, the pastor of RCCG (2) stated:

> The prayer of us in the church is that we should not carry out any funerals at all. During my time as a pastor it has only taken place three times.[901]

The pastor of RCCG (1) stated:

> I have been fortunate as even though it is the duty of a pastor to conduct funerals, I don't think that any pastor would want to do this in a hurry. You pray for people to keep them alive according to the ministry of the church.[902]

As can be seen, death within their congregations is difficult to accept for these RCCG pastors and their churches tend to pray against its occurrence. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu argues that the theology of healing goes hand in hand with prosperity, and is directed towards the needs of people for healing and deliverance.[903] The 'prosperity gospel' is preached and taught in many parts of the Pentecostal movement, including some of the churches in this study.

Mark Sturge argues that the prosperity gospel has turned out to be one of the most divisive theologies in BMCs. He points out that often the prosperity gospel has been portrayed as an abusive theology that uses Scripture out of context, to draw income or 'seed offerings' from vulnerable people.[904] However, Sturge concedes that properly considered prosperity is on a spectrum with liberation theology and both theologies seek the same basic objectives to: (1)

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[901] Interview of pastor of RCCG (1).
[902] Interview of pastor of RCCG (2).
[903] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), pp.121-123.
[904] Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done*, p.138.

Highlight from Scripture God's deep concern for the poor, marginalised and the suffering; (2) Renounce poverty as a curse deserved by people from particular ethnic groups or geographical locations; (3) To dispel the myth the humanity's hope for the future rests only in our eschatological hope, rather, both theologies claim that we can experience the fullness of God's blessing in this life as well as in the future; (4) To challenge people's negative perceptions of themselves, their circumstances and their future and to offer hope.[905]

Therefore, based on these objectives there are arguably positive elements of prosperity theology that apply to Pentecostals who are recently bereaved. Firstly, it expresses God's deep concern for those suffering in grief. Secondly, it claims that people can still experience the fullness of God's blessing even after their loss. Finally, it offers hope, health and comfort for all believers in this life. At the same time Sturge points out that 'there is often little generosity of spirit towards those who do not measure up to "the measure of faith" so as to bring about transformation in their own circumstances'.[906] Therefore, the negative consequence of the prosperity gospel in the context of death is that it may discourage the bereaved from grieving openly as it is assumed to demonstrate a weakness in their faith. Robeck points out that while overt expressions of the prosperity gospel are rejected by classical Pentecostals, this teaching still influences many Pentecostal believers across the movement.[907]

Simon Chan argues that an over-realised eschatology may best explain the inability of many Pentecostals to see trials and difficulties as part of Christian life. Pentecostal 'healing' ministries which form part of the prosperity movement have been criticised because of their

[905] Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done*, p.139.
[906] Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done*, p.140.
[907] D G Robeck, "Future Trajectories", in A. Perriman (ed.), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and Positive Confession Theologies* (Carlisle: Acute Paternoster Press, 2003), pp 28-31.

inability to accommodate suffering as a positive component of Christianity which has influenced many in the global Pentecostal community.[908] Warrington argues that while recognising that God seeks wholeness, healing and peace, suffering is still present in this life and not all conditions such as grieving should be removed entirely.[909] He makes a point that Pentecostals need to develop a comprehensive dialogue with the theology of 'suffering'. In this context grief can be considered as a form of suffering. He states that: 'The recognition of the place of suffering in Pentecostal theology needs to be redeemed as an integral aspect of an authentic spirituality that acknowledges the value of suffering in the life of the believer'. Warrington also suggests that suffering shapes life, meaning that the life to come in which there is an absence of suffering, takes on a new eschatological perspective.[910]

The Pentecostal scholars, Pamela Englebert and Steve Eutsler have taken up this mantle to develop a theology of suffering. Englebert argues for a more resilient Pentecostal theology of suffering in her book: *Who is Present in Absence?*[911] This book is based on her research project which underscores the experiences of Pentecostals when they believe for divine intervention in the midst of suffering that does not materialise. Englebert believes that while healing may not occur in the physical body, the continuing work of the Spirit has the ability to generate ongoing healing in other ways.[912] A similar hypothesis may apply to Pentecostal funerals where there is the tendency to discourage grieving. This pattern ties in with criticisms of Pentecostalism as being too triumphalistic, making insufficient room for lament. Although Englebert does not directly address the subject of grief, her thesis can be utilised to encourage

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[908] Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement, Vol.21 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p.76.
[909] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.303.
[910] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.304.
[911] Pamela F. Englebert, *Who is present in Absence? A Pentecostal Theological Praxis of Suffering and Healing* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2019).
[912] Englebert, *Who is present in Absence?*, p.13

Pentecostals to believe in the continuing work of the Spirit, even in the midst of grief, which is still part of God's ongoing process of reconciliation and restoration.

Eutsler takes a similar position to Englebert and argues that authentic faith is most clearly demonstrated when a believer trusts God while simultaneously facing a challenging set of circumstances. This would include bereavement. Suffering is also seen by Eutsler as God's way of refining, transforming or correcting believers and has the authority to use it on occasions to serve his purposes (1 Cor. 11:29-32; Jas 1:2-4). Eutsler suggests that suffering may provide an opportunity to depend on God more and to demonstrate love for others.[913]

There is also a pneumatological dimension to the theology of suffering which could provide a greater awareness of the role of the Spirit for the bereaved. The South Korean pastor, Yonggi Cho, writes that God is the Spirit not only of power and triumph but also power and triumph through suffering.[914] In his commentary on the book of Acts, Gaventa argues that the Spirit, who set the agenda for the development of the Church, did so on a route often categorised by opposition and suffering (Acts 9:16; 14:22). One of the important messages of Luke is that suffering is often the normal route for God to fulfil his plans.[915] This means that in the context of funerals, grieving can be an integral experience of the spiritual growth and endurance of the believer through suffering.

The sociologist, Geoffrey Gores, points to a survey conducted in Britain in 1965 which revealed that the Jewish participants found concentrated and overt mourning therapeutic and

[913] Steve D. Eutsler, "Why Are Not All Christians Healed?" *Paraclete* Vol 27.2: pp.15-23 (21-22).
[914] D.Y. Cho, *When I Am Weak, Then I am Strong: A Sermon Series* (Seoul: Logos, 2003).
[915] B.R. Gaventa, "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Interpretation* Vol 42 (1988), pp.146-157.

they valued not having to hide their grief.[916] Studies have also found that funeral services may reduce the risk that mourning will become perpetual.[917] According to Gores, grieving is a form of ritual spiritual/social catharsis which enables those who grieve to express powerful emotions about how they feel regarding the deceased.[918] It is beyond the remit of this research to evaluate the psychological benefits of grieving, but these studies demonstrate how important it is for the bereaved to be given time, space and permission to express their feelings. Thus, a theology of suffering for Pentecostals would encourage funeral services to provide a space for a collective expression of mourning at a time when people realise their own vulnerabilities and dependence on the Spirit.

7.8 Pentecostal Funeral rites

In this section I examine how ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death, in relation to selected funeral rites, converge or diverge with normative and formal theologies. In general, Pentecostal funerals involve a wide range of rites which take place in two ritual contexts: the church funeral service and the graveside service. These include rites of prayer, songs and hymns, tributes, bible readings, preaching, burial and cremations. However, for this section of the thesis I will focus my reflections on the rite of songs and hymns and the rites of Burials and Cremations.[919]

7.8.1 The rite of 'Songs and Hymns'

In three of the funeral services there was a place for 'praise and worship' songs at the beginning of the service led by the 'praise and worship' team. 'Praise and worship' has become a popular

[916] Geoffrey Gores, *Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: Cresset, 1965).
[917] Parks, Laungani, Young, *Death & Bereavement Across Cultures,* p.47.
[918] Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion,* p.301.
[919] Other funeral rites such as flag tributes, spoken tributes, and the eulogy have been excluded from this section as it would not be possible to discuss them all within the limitations this thesis.

term among Pentecostals and usually churches speak of 'worship' when referring to the main phase of the church service where there is singing.[920] According to Cartledge, worship is very important to Pentecostal Christians as it is a place where people seek the presence of God and from which other kinds of divine encounter are experienced.[921]

During the black Pentecostal funerals, I observed that the worship service was a time of expressive, free flowing singing led by a worship team. The 'praise and worship' songs embodied the mode of celebration characterised by expressiveness and a quality of spontaneity as described by Albrecht.[922] Cartledge notes that the musical style of charismatic worship in typical Pentecostal services are usually very contemporary and even the older hymns are given a contemporary feel.[923] However, during the funeral services I observed, the energetic praise songs at the beginning of the service often gave way to a quieter mode of singing of traditional hymns which led the congregation to a more meditative, reflective worship. What is noticeable about these hymns is that most of them were written before the beginning of the twentieth century which diverged from the normative contemporary style of worship highlighted by Cartledge.

Thomas Long maintains that what is needed in a Christian funeral is to use familiar language, to sing songs that were known from childhood as it may assist with the grieving process. He

[920] An illustration of the point was demonstrated at Elim (B'ham) where the officiating minister signalled at the beginning of the service at the pulpit by saying. 'Let us pray before we begin to worship'. However, I do not believe that this means that Pentecostals believe that prayer is not part of worship in the general sense but often they use the term synonymously with 'singing'.
[921] Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), p.51.
[922] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, p.181.
[923] Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, p. 51.

makes the point that as familiar words of old hymns that have shaped the theology and thoughts in the past are sung, they help to lifts the souls of the congregation to worship God.[924]

During the black funerals in this field research, there were many hymns that were used which focused on the Christian life and journey and hymns of pilgrimage. These hymns included *How Great Thou Art* [925] and *Amazing Grace* [926] which both have explicit eschatological themes. I also noted that there was another genre of praise songs that were sung at the graveside during the British Caribbean funerals I attended. These included: *When the Roll is Called Up Yonder,*[927] *Goodbye World,*[928] *I'll Fly Away,*[929] and *When the Trumpet of the Lord Shall Sound.*[930] These songs lifted the atmosphere and were more exuberant, high-spirited and eschatological in nature.

It was customary for the last song at the graveside to be *Sleep On, Beloved.* This song carries a more sombre tone as it encourages the deceased to:

> Sleep on, beloved, sleep and take thy rest
> Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast
> We love thee well, but Jesus loves thee best
> Goodnight, goodnight, goodnight.[931]

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[924] Long, *Accompanying them with Singing*, p. 19.
[925] *How Great Thou Art,* Carl Boberg (1859-1940), the final verse, which includes the line: When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation, and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart', speaks of the eschatological hope that Christians have.
[926] *Amazing Grace,* John Newtown (1725-1807). The second verse of the song *Amazing Grace* includes the line "T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far…and Grace will lead us home", which encapsulates the importance of the grace of God through the struggles of this life and the ultimate destiny of the soul.
[927] *When the roll is called up yonder*, James M. Black (1856 – 1938). This hymn captures the image of the glorious coming of Christ on the last day: 'When his chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies' for their roll call in heaven.
[928] *Goodbye World,* Author unknown. A popular chorus which speaks words in proxy on behalf of the deceased that they are saying goodbye to the world and are welcoming an eternal life in Christ.
[929] *I'll fly Away,* Albert E. Brumley (1929). This hymn alludes to the doctrine of the 'rapture' by reminding the saints that their loved one will fly 'To a land where joy shall never end'.
[930] *When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound,* James M. Black (1893).
[931] *Sleep on, beloved,* Sarah Doudney (1841-1926).

Untypical for Pentecostals, the words of this song appear to be directed to the deceased body in the grave as a form of 'prayer'. As I discussed in chapter 5, the practice of prayers to the dead goes against the normative doctrine of Pentecostal churches as it is seen as unbiblical.[932] However, this song can be treated as a piece of religious drama in the manner described by Long.[933] During my observations this song was 'performed' in a way that suggests that it was not literally directed at the deceased and could not be regarded as a prayer in a liturgical sense.

According to Diana Hayes, the genre of these graveside songs are 'spiritual' songs which originated in the plantations of North American slaves of African heritage. Hayes describes spiritual songs as 'cries to heaven by helpless people putting their faith in a far-off heaven in order to maintain their human dignity in the present hell in which they passed their daily lives'.[934] In other words, the spirituals were considered 'sorrow songs' singing about a faraway heavenly place which enabled slaves to encourage themselves in their dire conditions. James Cone was one of the first Black American theologians to recognise and recover the true meaning of spirituals. He affirms that rather than passive songs of tortured souls longing for their heavenly reward, the spirituals were theological texts that laid the groundwork for escape plans, rebellions, and other forms of resistance to their enslavement. According to Cone, amongst contemporary African Americans, spirituals are a form of 'unity music' that 'shapes and defines black existence and creates cultural structures for black expression'.[935]

Building on Cone's work, Annemarie Mingo explores the role of music in 'Black Freedom struggles', especially the historic Civil Rights Movement, to argue that such music produced

[932] See chapter 5.
[933] Long, *Accompanying them with Singing,* p.157.
[934] Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace,* pp.72-78.
[935] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), pp.7-17.

new theo-ethical and socio-political texts that supported activism. These texts were articulated through alternative oral methods that supported the activists' theological and ethical beliefs about the struggles they participated in. She writes:

> Music has an ability to move and transform individuals and societies. Without the need of formal skills, expertise, or material resources, Black music has been a catechistic vehicle teaching the faith and beliefs of the people for centuries.[936]

Mingo also notes that with black 'freedom' songs, anyone could lead a song and, therefore, shape the message being conveyed in public spaces to both the internal group of participants and external onlookers. During the Civil Rights Movement, freedom songs were rarely solo acts and were often a part of the communal action and public statement. The song leader would raise a song with the hope that the congregation would 'catch it' and carry the message further than one individual voice could.[937] Although the spirituals sung at the graveside in my research may not have had such strong political connotations, they still seem to shape and define British Caribbean identity and create a cultural rite for black expression of mourning at the grave side. Cone and Mingo still help us to recognise that the music of graveside burials draws from numerous music sources: the scriptural anchors of the spirituals, the political consciousness of freedom movement songs and the sacred lyrics of gospel music.

Focusing on the Black British context, the black scholar Dulcie McKenzie argues that the identity of Black British gospel music is subsumed in the historical narrative of African American gospel music, and there is very little awareness of its uniqueness. She explains that Black British gospel music carries a postcolonial identity which not only draws from African-

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[936] Annmarie Mingo, "Transgressive Leadership and Theo-ethical Text of Black Protest Music," *Black Theology* 2019 Vol. 17, no. 2 (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group) pp.91 – 113 (91).
[937] Mingo, "Transgressive Leadership and Theo-ethical Text of Black Protest Music", pp. 92 – 94.

American sources but also from African and Caribbean roots.[938] She also points out that Black British Gospel music is guilty of appropriating other influences and music genres without recognition, thereby decontextualizing their own experience, in particular African American and White Christian music.[939] However, for the graveside 'spiritual' songs observed in this field research, the bereaved appeared to have more regard for the postcolonial artistic legacy of their own African-Caribbean roots and influences and somehow other gospel music genres did not seem to fit this context.

7.8.2 Burial Rites

The following is an extract from my field notes for one of the two British Caribbean burials at a cemetery that I attended:

> The graveside service was officiated by the same minister who officiated at the church service. The minister faced the coffin while it was resting securely over the empty grave while the people stood behind him. He shared some words of encouragement to the mourners, prayed and spoke the words of the committal while the coffin was being lowered into the grave. The first part of the service lasted about 10 minutes.[940]

In terms of the liturgy used for the 'committal' the officiating minister from each church read from their official church ministers' manual. Two examples are as follows:

> For as much as it has pleased Almighty God in his great mercy to take to himself the soul of our dear *brother/sister* here departed, we therefore commit *his/her* body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our earthly body that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the might working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. (EPC & AOG).[941]

> And now to the loving care of our heavenly Father we commend the spirit of this departed child and commit his/her body to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to ashes,

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[938] Dulcie A. McKenzie, "Black British Theology in Gospel Music," in Michael N Jagessar & Anthony G. Reddie (eds.), *Postcolonial Black British Theology: New Textures and Themes*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2007), pp.25-26.
[939] McKenzie, "Black British Theology in Gospel Music", p.27.
[940] Fields note of Funeral observation at COGOP (B'ham 1), 18 January 2018.
[941] Elim & AOG *Manual for Ministers* (Nottingham: Lifestream Publications, 2006), p.58.

> dust to dust: anticipating the great resurrection when the dead in Christ come forth with a new body and endless life with Christ our Lord. Amen (NTCOG).[942]

There is a lack of theological reflection on the formation of funeral liturgy by Pentecostal scholars. However, it is generally accepted that Pentecostal have inherited the wording of the 'committal' from mainline churches. For example, in the Anglican's *Book of Common Prayer* the committal is one prayer which states that the body is committed to the ground and focuses on its decay – 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'. Then after the assertion of the blessedness of those 'which die in the Lord' another prayer addresses God – with whom the dead in Christ will spend eternity.[943]

Therefore, the 'committal' is regarded as a universal rite within the Christian tradition. Davis describes the words of the committal as 'performative utterance'.[944] The statement 'we commit his/her body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' constitutes the utterance. The performative part is the throwing of the soil or a flower onto the coffin while it is being lowered to confirm the utterance. This marks a key ritual moment of the burial. In this context, the committal can be understood as a rite of transformation which focuses on creating a new order in which individuals and communities are radically changed. According to Bell, this is demonstrated by two important experiences: *liminality* (being in transition) and *communitas* (close interaction with others in the same experience). As a liminal stage, the status of the deceased body is changed in society from a 'living' corpse to a buried corpse. *Communitas* represents a special kind of community that the deceased is integrated into. I would suggest that Pentecostal liturgy resembles the liturgy of mainline churches such as the Church of

[942] Buxton, *Minister' Service Manual,* p.123.
[943] *Common Book of Prayer: Burial Service*.
[944] Davis, *Death, Ritual & Belief,* p.8.

England because the concepts of *liminality* and *communitas* are universal concepts of rites of passage.[945]

The pastor of Elim (Staffs) referred to the difficulties he had with expressing the second part of this committal, which emphasises the hope of the resurrection, if the deceased was not a Christian. He shared the following:

> Very often the most difficult questions that we have are linked to the death of a loved one and certainly when a person's faith remains uncertain. For the family who have a belief in God they have an uneasy hope that things would be okay and somehow God will benignly smile upon their loved ones and offer warm acceptance into his presence. No clergy would dare to contradict such optimism even though privately they may believe something different.[946]

This pastor's views resonate with Davis who points out that the Christian element of the committal is no longer important for most people in Britain for whom this life is the focus of existence.[947] Therefore, the question of the eternal destiny of someone whose faith was absent or uncertain can be awkward for Pentecostal clergy. An alternative approach would be for Pentecostals to develop alternative liturgy which addresses the issue of the destiny of the soul of non-believers where appropriate.

Some guidance is provided by Mark Earey who outlines four criteria that should make up a traditional funeral Christian which are: (1) A Christian minister leading the service; (2) A place of Christian worship being used for the service; (3) A form of service which articulates Christian assumptions about life, death, and life beyond death, for the person who has died and

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[945] Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, p.94.
[946] Interview with pastor of Elim (Staffs).
[947] Davies, *The Theology of Death*, p.62.

for people generally (4) A service in which the wider story being told also draws on Christian assumptions about the nature of God and the world.[948]

All of these criteria apply to Pentecostal funerals. The third criteria in particular emphasises that the conviction behind choosing a Christian funeral is about inviting the community of faith to recognise that the Christian life is patterned on Christ's own life, death and resurrection. The officiating minister may not assume that all departed persons they are committing are Christian but they work on the 'charitable assumption' which is defined by Earey as: 'commending the deceased to God in the general context of Christian hope in a loving God.'[949]

7.8.3 The rite of backfilling

Another performance rite at the graveside carried out by British Caribbeans after the committal is *backfilling* as described in my field notes:

> Although there were grave diggers waiting at the side, the grave was filled by several mourners, initially male family members and friends, who each were given a spade and carefully filled the grave. When many of the helpers became fatigued after a few minutes the spades were handed over to other volunteers and the work continued to rotate until the grave was filled. Subsequent helpers often included women and children.[950]

The pastor of COGOP (B'ham) also made the point:

> The filling of the grave has cultural significance and it is a form of tribute as it is the last act you do for the departed. Some people feel as if they owe it to their loved ones to put in the effort.[951]

One of the participants in the focus groups also commented on this rite:

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[948] Mark Earey, *Worship that Cares: An Introduction to Pastoral Liturgy* (London: SCM Press, 2012), pp.168-169.
[949] Earey, *Worship that Cares*, pp.170-171.
[950] Field notes of Funeral Observation on 2 March 2017.
[951] Supplementary Interview, Pastor of COGOP (B'ham 1), 22 April 2020.

> One of the things we do in our culture is the lively hymns and the covering of the coffin at the graveside. I went to a funeral where that did not happen, and I felt that it was very strange to walk away from the grave to leave the filling to the diggers.[952]

This participant noted that in other mainline church traditions the mourners will depart from the graveside and leave it to the grave diggers to fill the grave sometime after they have left. This seemed very strange to this participant as the rite of backfilling highlighted the importance within the Black Caribbean community of ensuring that the grave is covered by themselves *before* they leave the grave side. The corporate participation of the mourners in backfilling seemed to connect them more closely with the final stage of the burial ritual. By carrying out backfilling routinely at every funeral, this appears to have established an important tradition within the British Caribbean community as it is concerned with how the bereaved connect with each other and with the deceased. Vondey argues that Pentecostal liturgy, holding on to its roots in the ritual cultures of the industrial world, can thus be an opportunity to repossess the character of 'work' in the play of people.[953] Vondey sees this notion of liturgical play, characterised by the dynamic to transform other structures, as a way of juxtaposing the efficacy of signs with the freedom of the Spirit. Therefore, backfilling could also be regarded as a way for mourners to exercise freedom of the Spirit to express their final goodbyes to the deceased in form of practical help and liturgical play.

7.8.4 Grave tributes

I also observed that once the burial grave has been filled, mourners participated in grave tributes which took various forms. One rite involved dressing the grave with a vast array of flowers and bouquets. Other items that were thrown either in or on top of the grave included money, letters

[952] V23 of NTCOG (B'ham 2) Focus Group.
[953] Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, pp.132-133.

and olive oil.[954] One of the participants of the focus groups also shared an account of believers using olive oil to pour over the burial site. According to Warrington, the 'normative' approach to using oil in Pentecostal churches is for healing services which is often poured or dabbed on the forehead of individuals as a symbol of the impartation of the work of the Holy Spirit.[955] However, the use of anointing oil pouring on the burial ground for the deceased is a divergence from this practice of only using anointing oil for the living. In the context of Pentecostal burials, it is not likely that anointing oil is used to impart the work of the Spirit in the body of a corpse. Neither is it certain whether the pouring of anointing oil is treated as a form of libation which is offered in remembrance of departed love ones.

Several Caribbean participants stated that alcohol such as rum was poured into the grave at the committal as a form of libation. An explanation was given by one of them:

> Sometimes according to the ways of the person in their life they would have some lovely tributes at the service. Sometimes at the graveside if the person was not saved some people would say all they want is a drink now and they would pour some of the drink in the grave. I don't think it looks very good, but that was the ways of the person while they were alive. [956]

Aldred writes about when he officiated at a wedding for a British Caribbean couple, they wanted an African-centric blessing ceremony to identify themselves first and foremost as people of African descent. A primary means of retaining their Africanness was through the traditional pouring of water as libation which was offered in remembrance of departed love ones. Aldred adds: 'Libation in reference to the departed represented a symbol of family,

[954] In the case of the letter, the family wrote letters to their mother and put them in the coffin before the internment. V10 of Elim (B'ham) Focus Group.
[955] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p.291
[956] V37 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.

continuity, contact, communion, fellowship and remembrance,' all of which are characteristics of traditional African culture.[957]

It is evident that for some British Caribbeans, grave tributes such libations are a means by which some British Caribbeans are explicitly expressing their Africanness. Many other British Caribbeans perform these rituals without being aware that they are a retention from ATR. Mbiti states that in most parts of Africa burial is the usual means of disposing of the body of a dead person and libations over the grave is a custom that can be traced back to different countries in Africa. [958] In many parts of Africa, adult members of the family pour out water or some other beverage on the ground or place food on the ground for the spirits of the family.[959] Mbiti also points out that it is customary in many parts of Africa to bury some belongings with the body, such as weapons, foodstuffs, ornaments, money and utensils. The belief behind this custom is that the departed needs weapons to defend him or herself along the way to the next world, or food to eat on the journey.[960] He also explains that placing personal items on the grave is a custom that has been traced back to different countries in Africa and graves are often treated as religious places and shrines. In Africa, the family shrines are usually set up on the land of the family home and they are set apart for remembering the departed. Before these shrines, food items or libations are sometimes offered on a regular basis.[961] Therefore these burial and grave tributes show that many African traditional practises are retained amongst the British Caribbeans, especially the libations, the cleansing rituals, albeit to a lesser degree. However,

[957] Aldred, *Respect*, pp. 130-134.
[958] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, p.114.
[959] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, p.146
[960] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, p.114.
[961] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, pp.123-124.

many people in Caribbean Pentecostal communities do not appear to be aware of the African roots of some of these grave tributes.

The integration of non-Christian rituals within Pentecostal Caribbean funeral rites appears to diverge from the normative Pentecostal doctrine of sanctification and holiness which is considered by Jones to be a core belief.[962] Two examples of this doctrine are expressed in the following statements of belief:

> Sanctification is another grace of God by which our souls are progressively and completely cleansed. This is the second accomplishment of the grace which through our faith in the Blood of Jesus Christ is wrought after we have been justified and freed from our sins or regenerated (RCCG).[963]

> Sanctification, like salvation, ultimately spans the entire life of the believer. Initially, it is a work of grace subsequent to being justified, regenerated, or born again. It is an instantaneous work, which both sets one apart for God (1 Corinthians 1:2) and crucifies and cleanses the old nature, enabling the believer to be free from the dominant rule of sin (COGOP).[964]

Although there is no common agreement on the doctrine of sanctification among Pentecostal denominations, they all share to some degree a mutual concern for personal purity. According to the Pentecostal theologian Matthias Wenk, Pentecostals' emphasis on personal and corporate purity also has the potential of fostering individualist and exclusive tendencies as well as a sense of separation from the rest of society.[965] Gerd Theissen argues that the doctrine of sanctification is rooted in the moral codes of the Old Testament Israelites. Thereby, the aim of these moral codes was the realisation of a renewed community of people pursuing holiness to

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[962] C. E Jones, "Holiness Movement" in Burgess & van Der Mass (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp.726-29.
[963] RCCG, "Statement of beliefs."
[964] COGOP (UK), "Our Doctrine".
[965] Matthias Wenk, "The Church as Sanctified Community," in John C. Thomas (ed.), *Toward Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), pp.105-111.

guarantee a successful living together.[966] However, Burridge challenges the traditional Pentecostal doctrine of sanctification by arguing that Jesus promotes an inclusive approach to holiness, and he radically promoted a renewed community characterised by acceptance of those formerly marginalised and excluded.[967]

This view is supported by Wenk who emphasises that Jesus' vision of a holy community was not characterised by fear of associating with the ungodly and sinners or their ungodly action, or by an anxiety of becoming defiled because of the neglect of certain purity laws.[968] For Oakes, while the Church's identity as a 'holy community' that is called out by God marks a certain separation of the church from the rest of the world this was not based on an exclusive understanding (2 Cor. 6:14-7.1). This degree of separation was not based on any virtues or moral qualities evidenced in the Church but on the inclusive presence of the Spirit in the Church (1 Corinthians 12; 2 Cor. 7:2). Thus, Oakes regards Paul's understanding of the Church as 'holy people' as both having an exclusive and inclusive aspect to it.[969] Similarly, Van Gennep saw the sacred as something that is not always fixed but as a relative one that readily shifts in different situations and at different ritual stages.[970]

Therefore, the practice of 'non-Christian' grave tributes amongst British Caribbean mourners does not necessarily amount to the compromising of the Pentecostal doctrine of sanctification. On the one hand Pentecostals are not likely to be aware of the African traditional religious roots of grave tributes. However, British Caribbean participants also appear to be expressing their

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[966] G. Theissen, *Erleben and Verhalten der ersten Christen: Eine Psychologue des Urchristentums* (Gutersloh: Gutersloher Veragshus, 2007), pp.408-409.
[967] R. A. Burridge, *imitating Jesus: An inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp.73-78.
[968] Wenk, "The Church as Sanctified Community," pp.116-117
[969] P. Oakes, "Made Holy by the Holy Spirit: Holiness and Ecclesiology in Romans," in K.E. Brower and A. Johnson (eds.), *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp.167-83.
[970] Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, p.37.

own identity as they reconstruct their own rituals for honouring the dead rather than practicing any form of ATR.

Hughes makes the point that the bereaved have also used self-created rituals to challenge the clergy's usual dominant role.[971] Many families and individuals who do not identify with a Pentecostal church because they do not consider themselves to be committed Christians may often find alternative rituals that define their family or cultural ties. Also, the younger generation appear to be expressing their own identity as they challenge traditional Christian ritual norms when it comes to dealing with death.

According to Cooke, clergy appear to be no longer regarded as the one with the absolute power to regulate every ritual activity to the mourning community. His or her role is that of a facilitator rather than a controller.[972] This research has shown that mourners would rather become engaged in some shared ritual rather than simply witness a religious ceremony being performed by an official 'expert'. Notwithstanding, Kelly encourages clergy to be co-creators and managers of sacred spaces. Thus, clergy are the ones who co-ordinates the formation of a sacred space which involves marking the boundaries within which people can feel secure enough to allow expressions of grief both individually and collectively.[973] Therefore, Pentecostal clergy need to find a balance in establishing a structure which enables the bereaved to have the freedom to exercise personal rituals that honour their loved ones while maintaining a fundamentally Christian framework.

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[971] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.26.
[972] Cooke, *Power and the Spirit of God*, p.149 & 155.
[973] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, pp.128-129.

7.8.5 Cremation Rites

Here is an extract of my field notes when I observed a cremation service at Elim (Staffs):

> The funeral director walks the coffin on a trolley from the cars to the front of the church rather than the minister. The mourners followed the coffin into the crematorium and others who were already inside were asked to stand or did so spontaneously for the entry of the coffin. There were no tributes by any family members or friends**.** The main tribute was given by the minister in his sermon and the whole service lasted about 20 minutes. At the end of the service the main focal point was the wreaths and flowers placed in a section of the remembrance garden designated for the deceased.[974]

According to Davies, the acceptance and increase of cremations in British mainstream society offers a remarkable example of ritual development and social change that can be interpreted in a number of ways. This includes cultural adaptation, a form of secularization or the sacralisation of a secular space by religious organisations.[975] However, where Davies refers to 'mainstream society' he appears to be referring mainly to white British people which are represented by the white Pentecostals in this study. None of the black participants had been to a cremation which involved a close family member.

The white participants explained that ashes are used in a variety of ways:

> My friend scattered her husband's ashes at Earlswood Lakes because that was his favourite place.[976]

> My family members have had their ashes scattered at the crematorium at the gardens which are very beautiful. I also know of a friend of ours whose husband died and he had his ashes scattered in the garden of his favourite pub.[977]

The above shows that ashes have come to be important as a focal symbol of cremation, which is now itself established as culturally normative in Britain, albeit mainly amongst white communities. With regard to a theology of cremation, according to Davies the symbolism of

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[974] Field Notes of Funeral Observation dated 30 November 2016.
[975] Davies, *Theology of Death*, p.129.
[976] V5 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[977] V6 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.

cremation lies in the ashes. Davies challenges the current cremation liturgy of mainline churches which assumes that ashes are 'like' a corpse and to be buried in and through a 'burial theology'. He argues that ashes are more like a final product than the 'intermediate substance' of a corpse.[978] Also, unlike a corpse, ashes do not carry the same symbolic double message of a death-process and a future resurrection as in the case of burials.[979] When ashes are buried in a grave and treated as a body, this symbolic dissonance can be partly overcome, but when people actively do not bury them in a formal liturgical fashion, but use them in some private rite like those described by the participants, then it is unlikely that the resurrection message will predominate.

The white British participants were quite positive about cremations:

> I think that a lot of people find that it is more economical to be cremated and I think that is just an accepted thing that most people [in her local community] are cremated rather than buried.[980]
>
> Most cremations are cheaper.[981]
>
> I've been to more cremations than burials simply because there are more cremations than burials in our day and age.[982]

In contrast, from my observations all the people that were buried were African or Caribbean. During the focus groups the participants of the black majority churches of both British African and Caribbean churches gave various reasons why *burials* where the overwhelming preference for disposal of the body. For some they preferred burials because they are more personal and intimate:

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[978] Davies, *Theology of Death,* p.180.
[979] Davies, *Theology of Death,* pp.143-144.
[980] V3 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[981] V4 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[982] V5 of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.

> I would prefer that I could be buried where someone could come and talk to me.[983]
>
> I think burials are more popular because they are more personal. Cremations are over in about 15 minutes.[984]

For some participants the reasons given were based on culture and tradition:

> Also, it is not culturally from our background, it is not something that is generally done… The tendency is to do what your forefathers usually do.[985]
>
> Personally, I would not have a problem of being cremated because firstly I would not know. However, it would depend on how your family left behind feels about it because it is so traditional to be actually buried; it might go against the grain with those who are left behind.[986]
>
> In Africa you are buried where you own your land. That is where you have the family. If you are a member of the tribe, you will be buried there.[987]

Thus, for most of the black African and Caribbean participants, preference for burials is not necessarily motivated by theological convictions; it appeared to be based primarily on custom and tradition. According to Davis, the very existence of graves in village cemeteries ensure a continuing relationship between the living and the dead.[988] Similarly, in rural parts of the Caribbean and Africa it is customary for deceased to often be buried in rural cemeteries, on family-owned or on tribal owned land. John Lamp acknowledged this burial tradition of British Caribbeans, observing that, 'the informal liturgies and rituals of BMC's provide a powerful sense of raw contact with the fact of death'.[989] For many in the British Caribbean communities,

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[983] V3 of Handsworth Church Focus Group.
[984] V6 of AOG Church Focus Group.
[985] V4 of RCCG (1) Focus Group.
[986] V7 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[987] V47of Elim (Staffs) Focus Group.
[988] Davis, *Theologies of Death*, p.134.
[989] John Lampard "Funeral liturgies of Free Churches," in Peter C Jupp and Tony Rogers (eds.), *Interpreting Death: Christian Theology and Pastoral Practice* (London: Cassell, 1997), p.186.

this raw contact with the deceased during their funeral services and beyond is also an important experience.

Aldred's theology of 'respect' may also provide an explanation about why both Black African and Caribbeans prefer burials. He points out that the key to engaging with the British Caribbean community is 'to understand them, their history, present setting and future aspirations'.[990] British Caribbean Christians, having to deal with all the struggles they had to endure as minorities in Britain, and having survived and prospered against the odds, now say in their context: 'Respect us'.[991] Aldred devises a model for explaining 'respect' based on six cornerstone principles: 1) information; 2) relationship; 3) ethnicity; 4) faith; 5) self-respect; and 6) other.[992] The principle of ethnicity is relevant to this study and knowledge of the particular ethnic identity of the British Caribbean is essential. According to Aldred, there is a determination by Black Caribbeans to protect their ethnically defined identity based on their whole being: including geography, historical belonging and appearance.[993] In the British Caribbean culture one's appearance (which is much more than the colour of one's skin, and includes demeanour and presentation in life) is equally as important in death. This means that how the dead are dressed, encased and transported to the next life is an expression of the dignity and respect that many British Caribbeans demand in their funerals.

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[990] Aldred, *Respect*, p.180.
[991] Aldred, *Respect*, p.181.
[992] 1) information – meaning the sources in which their ethnicity has been used to depict their culture and religiosity 2) relationship – the formal and informal 'structures' for relationship forming and their consequences 3) ethnicity – how ethnic affinity is regarded as a defining characteristic 4) faith – navigating the Eurocentric and Afrocentric form of Christianity in which Caribbean British view themselves 5) self-respect – is about self-knowledge – acquiring it by all appropriate media 6) other – respect for 'other' is synonymous with knowledge of Whites, both people and institutions, Aldred, *Respect*, pp.182-198.
[993] Aldred, *Respect*, p.193.

Furthermore, the sociologist Richard Sennett argues that the concept of 'respect' has gained tremendous currency in the self-reference of many advanced communities, or rather amongst the economically marginal who seek 'respect'. Not to 'get respect' is to feel a lack of dignity and a general sense of worthlessness.[994] Just as dignity and respect are sought for in life so too in death. Therefore, the need to treat the corpse with respect becomes the vehicle for these values in black communities, and cremation is rejected as a form of indignity and violence.

In contrast to British Caribbeans, cremations appear to be strongly rejected by West African Pentecostals for theological reasons as explained by this RCCG pastor:

> I think it is the connotation that it has to do with burning the dead body and no one desires to be burnt. The people of our church pray that they would not go into the fire from hell.[995]

Some RCCG laity objected to cremations for similar reasons:

> I would always struggle with the concept of being burnt… I just believe that somehow it goes against the principles I believe in and what the church and the Bible says.[996]

> Personally, I am against cremation and the reason is that if anybody is going to hell that is what it feels like.[997]

Therefore, cremation appears to be abhorrent to many African Pentecostals because of its association with their perception of the biblical reality of hell. Fire has had many negative connotations related to the Pentecostal theology of hell. According to Menzies and Horton, 'hell' is the term normally used by Pentecostals to describe a place of torment, darkness and pain (Matt. 8:12; 13:4-50), and identified with the Lake of Fire - the destiny of the devil and all demons (Rev 20:10). For Pentecostals, the description of the fire of hell being unquenchable

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[994] Richard Sennett, *Respect: The formation of Character in an age of equality* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
[995] Interview, Pastor of RCCG (2).
[996] V6 of COGOP (B'ham 1) Focus Group.
[997] V5 of RCCG (1) Focus Group.

means that it lasts forever (Rev 20:10).[998] John Piper, who serves as the chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minnesota, spoke a message at a Passion Conference in Georgia in 2016 called *Why Christian should Bury, Not Cremate Their Dead*. Piper objects to cremation due to the bible's repeated condemnation of fire as evil and its association with hell. He writes: "The use of fire to consume the human body on earth was seen as a sign of contempt. It was not a glorious treatment of the body but a contemptuous one."[999] Douglas Davies challenges this view by arguing that in burials, bodily decay and the earth itself will ultimately destroy the body anyway. Cremation, by contrast, actively accelerates the destruction of the body quicker through human-designed equipment.[1000] Warrington explains that Pentecostals do not have a developed Pentecostal theology of hell and have simply subscribed to the traditional Christian view of hell.[1001] Therefore, Pentecostals need to develop their theology of hell while they construct their theology of cremations.

According to Davies, historically Christ's death and resurrection became central to the belief and liturgical practice of the death-burial complex of Christian ritual.[1002] However, David Jones argues that ritual practices during biblical times are not always meant to set precedents for ritual practices in modern times, but rather reflect cultural patterns and the importance of the symbolism of that time.[1003] Jones acknowledges that the examples in the Old Testament of cremation or at least partial cremation were not represented in a positive light (Amos 2:1-3). There is also the example of the punishment of Achan which included bodies and possessions

[998] Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines*, p.251.
[999] John Piper, "Why Christian should Bury, Not Cremate their dead," spoken at the Passion Conference in Duluth, Georgia on 3 January 2016 reported by in *Christian Post* reported by Eric Metaza, https://www.christianpost.com/news/john-piper-why-christians-should-bury-not-cremate-their-dead-162709/, accessed on 16 May 2017.
[1000] Douglas Davies "Theologies of disposal," p.80.
[1001] Warrington, *Pentecostal Theologies*, p.320.
[1002] Douglas Davis, "Theologies of disposal", in Peter C Jupp and Tony Rogers (eds.), *Interpreting Death: Christian Theology and Pastoral Practice* (London: Cassell, 1997), p.186.
[1003] David Jones, "To Bury or Burn? Toward an Ethic of Cremation," *JETS* Vol 53.2 (June 2010), pp.33-47.

being burned (Joshua 7:15, 25). However, he argues that these incidents simply record events which occurred in an environment of desecration and judgment.[1004]

In discussing the symbolism of disposal, Davies suggests that the traditional burial ritual focuses on the body and its future resurrection whereas the only hope that can be read into the cremation ritual is the hope of a surviving soul.[1005] Davies also argues that the temporary presence of the dead corpse provides a powerful symbol for the basis of the belief for a transformed individual in the resurrection.[1006] He also points out that for Pentecostals the burial of the corpse also serves as a strong symbol for the rapture. The formulation of the belief that the dead should rest until Christ's return provides a picture that more closely aligns with the body rising from the 'grave' rather than some indeterminate place. In fact, the very idea of cemeteries is the place where bodies must be asleep in graves until the time of the rapture.[1007] Therefore, the theological language of the rapture resonates with the operant voices of burial-rites in black communities which place emphasis on the preservation of the corpse for the resurrection of the dead.

Notwithstanding, apart from the two RCCG pastors, all the other clergy did not have any theological objections to cremations and many of them have carried out cremations for non-church members. These pastors have also expressed that the normative position of their Pentecostal denominations neither objects to nor mandates cremation for body interment and none of their official ministers' manuals contained specific liturgy for cremation services.

[1004] David Jones, "To Bury or Burn?" pp.33-47.
[1005] Davis Davies, *Cremation Today and Tomorrow* (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1990), p.33.
[1006] Davis, *Theologies of Death,* p.22.
[1007] Davis, *Theologies of Death,* p.131.

Jerald Daffe wrote an article published by The International Church of God, Cleveland,[1008] entitled 'Cremation: The Believer's Option', which addresses the question, 'Is cremation an option for the believer?' Daffe suggests that from a biblical perspective the answer is 'yes' because believers have the assurance of a bodily resurrection regardless of how the body has been put to rest.[1009] This explains why amongst British Caribbean Pentecostals, pastors are allowed to carry out cremations, and the form of disposal of the body is left to the discretion of the departed and their family.

7.8.6 Memorial Rites

I attended a memorial service at Elim (Staffs) on the Sunday following the cremation service. This included a short address by the pastor about the deceased and a video clip by the deceased himself speaking about the experience of his Christian journey and the challenges with his faith. Also, when participants were asked at NTCOG (B'ham 2) whether anyone else could describe any other funeral rituals, customs or traditions either during or after the funeral services one person responded:

> A memorial service still takes place a year later or 10 years later.[1010]

Many other participants agreed that the memorial services often took place at the anniversary of the death of their relatives. After a funeral there is an acceptance of memorial rituals that maintain the memory of the dead among the living to assure the living that they will be remembered when they pass on. Another example of memorial rituals is when some of the

[1008] The International Church of God, Cleveland, is the international headquarters of the New Testament Church of God (UK).
[1009] Jerald Daffe, "Cremation: The Believer's Option," an article for The International Church of God, Cleveland (10 Feb 2017).
[1010] V33 of NTCOG (B'ham 2) Focus Group.

participants shared that they visited the graveside to connect with their deceased relatives, often at Christmas or on their birthdays as discussed in chapter 5. This was a way of memorialising the dead. These forms of memorial rituals appear to correspond with Bell's 'Calendrical Rites' which mark the passage of time, recurring periodically weekly, monthly or annually.[1011]

After a funeral there is an acceptance of memorial services by Pentecostals that help maintain the memory of the dead among the living to assure the living that they will be remembered when they pass on. For British Caribbean participants in this research, memorial rituals take place much sooner after a death during 'nine-nights'. During nine-nights, in order to create and integrate rounded memories of the deceased there is a need for the bereaved to share and hear stories about their loved one in the company of family and friends.[1012] This social discourse of the bereaved intended to develop and maintain memories of the deceased is a type of ritualised memorial which helps the bereaved to cope with their loss and have an ongoing connection with the deceased.

David Field gives us a useful insight into the question of how the memory is exercised when a person suffers bereavement of someone close to them. He suggests that the deceased person's life is remembered and gradually situated into a shared past for those who survive him or her. Field explains that one of the best ways to share memories of a particular event from the past is to go back to the place where it happened or to contact the group with whom the events were once shared.[1013] The domain of memory is constructed by two realities which oppose yet need one another – there is their experience of death, and the reality of the present.[1014] In this context,

[1011] Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, p.102.
[1012] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals,* p.33.
[1013] David Field, Jenny Hockey & Neil Small, *Death, Gender & Ethnicity* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge 1997), p.187.
[1014] Field *et al*, *Death, Gender & Ethnicity,* p.197.

when family and friends get together for nine-nights at the deceased's home this is the first gathering which enables the closely bereaved to share memories from the first place the deceased is often associated with.

For Moltmann, to live beyond death means to be remembered by your surviving family in retrospective gratitude and does not necessarily mean holding fast to the dead in such a way that we no longer have an independent life of our own.[1015] Similarly, speaking of 'communion of saints', Charles Hartshorne argues that if after a person dies their lives will be perpetually remembered by God we all have a form of life after death in the memory of others for a comparatively brief period.[1016] Although both the views of Moltmann and Hartshorne are in the context of Anglican and Catholic traditions, having an ongoing connection with the deceased appears to be a universal need. As we have seen in chapter 5, the Anglican and Catholic concept of 'communion of the saints' as well as the African belief in ancestor veneration both encourage perpetual remembrance. In the traditional West African context most ancestors are remembered for three or for generations as they continue to be revered by their descendants.[1017] Following the discussion about 'community with the dead' I would argue that the form of veneration associated with the dead is a way of memorialising the dead through ritual as well as a way of coping with the loss. It is about giving the bereaved permission to continue to remember their loved ones even if for a comparatively brief period.

[1015] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p. 125.
[1016] Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 307–.308
[1017] Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, p.121.

7.9 Reflections on funeral rituals during the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020)

During the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK from March 2020, Pentecostal clergy were guided by central[1018] and local[1019] government guidelines, funeral directors, and their church authorities as to how funerals services should take place during this time. These key guidelines included: 1) Prohibition of funeral services at churches; 2) Funerals services are limited to the graveside at cemeteries or in crematoriums; 3) Participants limited to a restricted amount of people at the graveside; 4) Prohibition of wakes at homes or other venues; 5) Backfilling must be carried out by the Council workers; 6) The graveside service is limited to one hour including the backfilling.

According to the pastor of NTGOG (B'ham 1) in the early period of the lockdown the attendees were required to leave the cemetery before the back-filling but this caused an uproar within the British Caribbean community. He explained why as follows:

> In the Caribbean tradition it is important that black people take responsibility for their loved ones being 'sent home' properly. They want to make sure that it is their loved ones that have been buried in the grave. They want to know that no one has stolen their clothes or any other items they have been buried with. Also, it is believed the spirit of the deceased would not be settled and if you did not send them home properly then their spirit would rise and torment you.[1020]

The pastor of COGOP (B'ham 1) also added that there is the feeling that we should be burying our loved ones ourselves and no-one else. Walking away with a grave unfilled is emotionally difficult for British Caribbeans**.** The response of the bereaved families to these restrictions in

[1018] Gov.uk, "Guidance: National lockdown: Stay at Home," https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home#weddings-civil-partnerships-religious-services-and-funerals, accessed 19 September 2020.
[1019] Birmingham City Council, "Arranging a Funeral". https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20210/deaths/370/arrange_a_funeral, accessed 19 September 2020.
[1020] Supplementary Interview, Pastor of NTCOG (B'ham 1), 13 May 2020.

general were feelings of being distraught, upset or horrified. Many of them felt they were not able to give their loved ones the proper funeral service or respect they deserved.

As we have seen in this chapter, in British Caribbean communities, the family members of the deceased normally welcome anyone who is related or connected to the deceased or the bereaved family to be part of the ritual community as described by Vizedom.[1021] This pandemic has led to the breakdown of this 'ritual community'. Amongst British Caribbeans, the physical gathering of the bereaved helps to enhance solidarity and creates a community of mourners whose grief is expressed within shared space.

Diana Hayes reminds us that Africans and their diaspora have a meaningful existence only to the extent that they participate in community and transmit life.[1022] The pastor of COGOP has attempted to reassure the bereaved families that they are only postponing rather than cancelling the funeral service by having a memorial service at a later date after the lockdown. In relation to a future memorial service the pastor of NTCOG also remarked:

> If they do not have this as a future reference plan they feel aggrieved that their loved ones have gone to the grave without any meaningful acknowledgement of the life that was lived.

This form of pastoral care will be a challenge for ministers as they co-construct memorial services in the future to help the bereaved to bring closure to their loss.

In terms of the potential long-term impact on British Caribbean funerals in future, the pastor of COGOP believes that the tradition of backfilling will begin to wane and the councils may take over this function completely as long as mourners remain present during the backfilling.

[1021] Vizedom, *Rites and Relationships,* pp.24-26.
[1022] Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace,* pp.16-17.

However, it remains to be seen whether throwing in the soil or other items in the grave will be sufficient for them to express their final goodbyes to the deceased. According to the pastor of NTCOG, British Caribbean families are also beginning to realise the considerable amount of money they are saving by not having a larger funeral service and a reception or wake. This may drive some families to have smaller funerals in the future. Therefore, more British Caribbeans may choose to seek less extravagant ways for their loved ones to 'die well.'

7.10 Conclusion

We have seen that 'home-going' services comprise of Pentecostal funeral liturgy which is open to playful invention of new rituals, freedom of expression and spontaneity. Despite use of more written liturgy than in conventional Pentecostal worship services, the Holy Spirit still remains an important source for oral funeral liturgy as an open response to Pentecostals' encounter with God.

The process of *inculturation* explains how many traditional practices and customs have been appropriated by the British Caribbean communities in Britain. In particular, inculturation appears to have brought African, African American, West Indian and British Caribbean traditions together into a cultural synthesis in Britain to produce the 'home-going' services. However, even with these several identities that have been constructed, the British Caribbean culture remains a unique part of British society which is reflected in their funeral liturgy.

It has been observed that the bereaved are not encouraged to grieve during funerals. This appears to be influenced by Pentecostal teaching relating to healing and prosperity. As a consequence, Pentecostals seem to have embraced an over-realised eschatology and have a tendency not to regard trials and difficulties as a normal part of Christian life. Pentecostals

need to develop a more robust theology of 'suffering' where the place of suffering can be redeemed as an integral aspect of an authentic spirituality. Such a theology has a pneumatological dimension which could provide a greater awareness of the role of the Spirit to guide, help as well as comfort the bereaved in their grief rather than insulate them from the experience of grief.

Burial and grave tributes show that many African traditional practises are retained amongst the British Caribbeans, especially the libations and flower tributes, albeit to a lesser degree. It is unlikely that most British Caribbeans practice these grave tributes as a primary means of retaining their Africanness. Even though the participants in this research did not appear to be aware of the African roots of most of these grave tributes, it can be argued that British Caribbeans are expressing their own identity as they reconstruct their own rituals for honouring the dead.

In general, this chapter has demonstrated that the minister appears to be no longer regarded as the one with the absolute power to regulate every death ritual. Clergy are encouraged to be co-creators and managers of sacred spaces and develop his or her role as a facilitator rather than a controller. The clergy in this research do not have a problem with allowing the bereaved to have the freedom to practice personal rituals to honour their loved ones provided that the fundamentals of the funeral are maintained within a Christian framework.

One of the most clear distinctions between white and black Pentecostals is that white Pentecostal prefer cremations and black Pentecostals prefer burials. However, both ethnicities do not appear to be motivated by theological convictions. White Pentecostals prefer cremations due to its cost and convenience. Black Pentecostals prefer burials to maintain culture and

tradition in their community. The burial ritual is also underpinned by the concept of ‘respect’ expressed by Aldred and Sennett which expresses the need for British Caribbeans to seek dignity in death, as many have struggled to obtain this respect in life. Notwithstanding, one practical issue that Pentecostal clergy need to resolve is to develop liturgy which can validate cremations for parishioners who may chose them.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to explore the significance of ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death among selected Pentecostal churches in Britain. This involved identifying and examining particular characteristics of ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death and Pentecostal death rituals.

By focusing on *ordinary* Pentecostal theology this thesis sought to map out the non-academic beliefs and practices of clergy and laity. The beliefs and practices of clergy were regarded as ordinary theology on the basis that they of themselves have their own authoritative theological voice as distinct from the normative and formal theologies. It was then possible to examine how ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death converge with or diverge from normative and formal Pentecostal theologies.

The primary focus of this study was to bring into dialogue normative and formal Pentecostal theologies to help to articulate or interpret ordinary Pentecostal theologies death in relation to selected beliefs and practices as far as possible. However, where there was a lack of critical discussion within normative and formal Pentecostal theologies, non-Pentecostal formal theologies were brought into dialogue to help to articulate or interpret ordinary Pentecostal theologies.

Although these selected Pentecostal churches were based in the West Midlands, they represented a diverse range of Pentecostal traditions including classical, neo-Pentecostal,

black-majority and white-majority churches as examined in chapter 1. Therefore, due to the plurality of normative and formal Pentecostal theologies of death it was also necessary to examine some of the key issues that arise within and between selected ethnic groups. This involved exploring any continuities and discontinuities of African and Caribbean traditional religions with ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death. A supplementary aim of the research was to stimulate clergy and laity to reflect theologically on the meaning of selected Christian and non-Christian death rites and how they can be accommodated or adapted to make them more meaningful for the bereaved within a Christian framework.

The following section is a summary of my findings resulting from the analysis within chapters 4 to 7 and what they tell us about an ordinary Pentecostal theology of death. This will be followed by my recommendations for revised practice and for further research.

8.2 Summary of findings: Towards an ordinary Pentecostal theology of death

In chapter 4 there was a 'multi-voices dialogue' relating to selected theologies of death themes. In the first part of the chapter, the 'normative' voices were brought into dialogue with 'espoused' voices focusing on the three theology of death themes - resurrection of the dead, material continuation and intermediate state.

The theme of the 'resurrection of the dead' was affirmed by the normative theology of all the churches and denominations represented in this research in their statements of belief. Most of the denominations appear to have adopted the 'Bible doctrines method' in their presentation of statements of belief and supporting publications. An ordinary Pentecostal theology of death appears to follow this normative tradition of drawing upon the bible as its sole or main source for doctrine. However, an ordinary Pentecostal theology can appropriate more critical

hermeneutical methods by engaging with a wider range of theological voices and themes. For instance, a way forward would be to develop a pneumatological approach which shifts the focus away from future eschatology to the transformative work of the Spirit in the lives of the bereaved through death rituals.

The theme of 'material continuation' has been articulated on the basis that there will be discontinuity of the physical body and continuity of the identity of the deceased person. Most of the Pentecostal clergy diverged from the Augustinian position that material continuation is necessary for continuation of identity and at least the basic components of the body must be retained in the resurrection. However, the commonly held belief in the 'rapture' by pastors and laity in this research and beyond remains an anomaly. This is because Pentecostals interpret the teachings by Paul that the deceased body will be literally 'raised from the grave' at the resurrection, therefore suggesting some form of material continuation. I have suggested that the belief in the rapture fails to provide sufficient insight into what Pentecostals believe about the material continuation of the body at the resurrection due to a lack of critical discussion about this teaching among Pentecostal scholars. We have seen that with classical Pentecostalism there is a predominant belief in the annihilation of the creation in the final judgement. However, an ordinary Pentecostal theology of death ascribes to both continuity and discontinuity of the resurrection of the body. This is similar to Volf and Land's argument for a newly constituted earth after the final judgment. With a newly constituted earth the transformation of the body is considered part of the consummation of the whole cosmos and necessitates the transformation rather than the annihilation of creation.

The empirical research revealed an ordinary Pentecostal theology of death where the dead can be immediately 'with Christ' while at the same time enter an intermediate state until the future

coming of Christ and the general resurrection. However, if one makes the distinction between third-person and first-person perspectives, from a first-person perspective, an immediate departure requires the deceased person to be in a non-conscious state because if they were conscious they would indeed experience an interval before the general resurrection. However, this empirical research has revealed a stronger convergence of a Pentecostal ordinary theology towards a conscious intermediate state of the soul, therefore, there can be no 'immediate departure' from a first-person perspective. In which case reconciling 'intermediate state' and 'immediate departure' within ordinary Pentecostal theology of death remains problematic.

Chapter 5 is a continuation of chapter 4, with the focus on the theme 'community with the dead'. It was evident that experiences of community with the dead, which include the closely bereaved talking to and dreaming about the dead, seem to be mainly prevalent amongst the British Caribbean participants. However, there was no evidence in the empirical data that any of the British Caribbean participants experienced direct communication with the dead in a manner analogous with the 'communion of the saints' or liturgical prayers to the dead as practiced by Catholics and Protestants.

The thesis has shown that there are some continuities between the beliefs of British Caribbean participants and West African traditional religions, particularly related to ancestors, demons and other spirits. The work of African scholars focusing particularly on the Yoruba and Akans from West Africa was brought into dialogue because of the historical links of these ethnic groups with the African diaspora in the Caribbean and Britain. African ancestors and the 'living dead', as described by Mbiti and Kalu, are embodied in a cosmic unity and the deceased are believed to be living in the ontology of invisible intangible spirits which are both malevolent

and benevolent. [1023] Similarly, the British Caribbeans in this research seem to regard deceased spirits as either malevolent or benevolent and believe that there is some interaction between the material and spirit worlds particularly through dreams. However, for British Caribbeans, deceased spirits did not have a significant role in their daily lives and they are not assimilated into their worldview in the same way as they are in West African traditional religions. Also, for British Caribbeans 'community with the dead' tended to be experienced by individuals on a private basis, whereas the West African traditional religious world is shared corporately with families and communities.

The British Caribbean Pentecostals in this study appear to have advocated a practical belief in the immanence of God by the Holy Spirit which accords closely with the holism of the African worldview as pointed out by Chigor Chike.[1024] However, there remains a tension between the normative voices of the church, who are more likely to confront these pre-Christians practices, and the ordinary voices of the laity who are more likely to accommodate them in varying degrees.

Chapter 6 was an analysis of how ordinary voices are embedded in the practices associated with Pentecostal pre-funeral rituals, focusing on funeral planning, wakes (called 'nine-nights' by British Caribbean Pentecostals) and superstitions. Pentecostals do not minister last rites to a person after their death because for Pentecostals this is regarded as unbiblical. However, the normative approach of Pentecostal clergy in this research is not dissimilar to other Christian traditions, whereby clergy can administer the 'anointing of the sick' before their death. Also, in the context of ministering to the bereaved at the point of death, for Pentecostal clergy, the

[1023] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, pp.85; Ogbu Kalu "Preserving a Worldview" in *Pneuma 24.2* (Fall, 2002), p.116-117.
[1024] Chike, *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*, p.80.

Spirit could be described as a *paraclete* who comes alongside the pastor to quietly administer comfort to the bereaved after their loss.

In terms of the 'organising ritual' of funeral planning, this study has shown that Pentecostal ministers have the primary role, in the form of 'pastoral care', rather than the funeral directors or the bereaved family. However, for British Caribbean participants the bereaved family also plays an important part in funeral planning and administering rites such as 'laying out' the deceased bodies. Despite the normative Pentecostal belief in the 'priesthood of all believers,' this research suggests that it is mainly the pastor who decides what the approved rituals are within the funeral services in accordance with the church's or denomination's doctrines and traditions. However, this is not always the case.

Amongst the British Caribbeans, nine-nights reflects the cultural and religious customs of the British Jamaican community rooted in both the Caribbean and Africa. There was a tension as to whether 'nine-nights' was primarily a religious ritual or a social engagement ritual. This was resolved by engaging with studies of ecclesiology by Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars. Hunston's 'Spirit ecclesiology' places nine-nights in the context of a form of Pentecostal worship where people are led by the Spirit rather than rely on formal settings or liturgy.[1025] This concept recognises that for most Pentecostals, worship acts are regarded as more sacred than worship spaces. Pentecostals can look to studies by Albrecht and Kärkkäinen in order to articulate the key components of a Pentecostal ecclesiology of nine-nights. Albrecht identifies three key components in framing any worldview: ritual time, ritual space and ritual identity.[1026] His concept of a 'transcending' sacred space recognises that Pentecostals often create a ritual

[1025] R. Hunston, "Church-the Body of Christ," in Brewster (ed.), *Pentecostal Doctrine*, pp.139-48 (147).
[1026] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit,* pp.122-123.

place, outside of the church, in which to experience God which applies to nine-nights.[1027] However, although family homes where nine-nights usually takes place can be treated as transcending sacred spaces it does not mean that sacred activities always take place. Kärkkäinen uses the term 'fellowship' to describe holistic activities which include both the worship and non-worship activities such as eating, drinking and socialising which take place during nine-nights in varying degrees.[1028] However, contemporary Pentecostal ecclesiology diverges from the ordinary theology of nine-nights which was originally practiced to drive out the deceased spirit from the family home.

The death superstitions or 'folk religion' practiced by some British Caribbeans appear to be rooted in the Jamaican practice of obeah and myalism. However, none of the participants seemed to be aware of the retentions of African or Jamaican folk religion in their practices. Applying Nassehi's concept of the 'culturalization of religion', it is possible that nine-nights and death superstitions mean different things to British Caribbeans to what they were originally intended.[1029] Members of British Caribbean Pentecostal churches, particularly the older generation, may turn to 'folk religion' for spiritual healing because there seem to be inherent inadequacies in elements of the Pentecostal tradition such that it does not always provide ultimately satisfying solutions for people who are bereaved. Ordinary theologies of death need to be developed to help Pentecostals to reconcile the folk religion within a biblically informed Pentecostal theology, thereby yielding new pathways for the inculturation of Christianity.

[1027] Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit,* pp.127-128.
[1028] Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology,* p.368.
[1029] Armin Nassehi, 'Religious communication' *Bertelsmann Stifuing* (Hg) (2008), 169-204.

Chapter 7 focused on a range of funeral liturgical activities. As a divergence from the oral tradition of classical Pentecostalism, there is more reliance on written liturgy in funerals in the form of ministers' manuals and order of services in a similar way to other Christian traditions. However, rather than using the written liturgy rigidly, there was still an integration of the 'oral tradition' which allowed for flexibility within the funeral service. Pentecostal funeral rites can be described as essentially a piece of religious drama or performance liturgy that interweaves several levels of God story as it relates to the deceased.[1030] The Holy Spirit is also an important source of Pentecostal liturgy which provides an 'open arrangement' of unrehearsed liturgy shared by both clergy and lay persons who often express this spiritual liberty from the pulpit particularly in black funerals. In African and British Caribbean communities the death of an individual affects not only the immediate family but the whole community and becomes a social affair and a ritual community. This 'ritual community' appears to be an African retention of a communal culture which embraces funeral gatherings as a community rather than a private affair.[1031]

Another way the British Caribbean bereaved express their loss uniquely is by treating funerals as 'home-going' services which as well as incorporating a 'celebration of life' of the deceased have their roots in African traditional religion.[1032] However, for British Caribbeans the deceased soul is not 'home-going' by joining with their African ancestors but journeying to their home in heaven in the Christian resurrection. Also, the extravagance of 'home-going' funerals is not simply an expression of wealth or a status symbol but a desire to 'die well' to counter the narrative of economic struggles many British Caribbeans face during their lifetime.

[1030] Long, *Accompanying them with Singing*, pp.77-78.
[1031] Kelly, *Meaningful funerals*, p.33.
[1032] Frey & Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, pp.23-24.

In terms of the effect of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on 'home-going' funerals, the mass gathering of the ritual community, the church service, nine-nights and other wakes have been restricted. Therefore, the ability to 'die-well' has been temporally stripped away from the British African Caribbean communities. It is significant that the normative elements of the funeral service by the grave side, such as the commendation and committal, have been retained. Notwithstanding, it appears that many people during this pandemic have not been satisfied that their love ones have had a good 'send off.' This suggests that, for African and Caribbean British Pentecostals, funerals are important social and religious events, where the bereaved can gather together as a ritual community with all their customs and traditions. In this study, inculturation appears to have brought African, African American, West Indian and British Caribbean traditions together into a cultural synthesis in Britain to produce the 'home-going' services. For instance, McKenzie's study of Black British gospel music helps to explain that grave-side spiritual songs carry a postcolonial identity which not only draws from African American sources but also from African and Caribbean roots.[1033] However, funeral traditions remain distinctive in African Caribbean culture and are a unique part of British culture.

Since 'home-going' services emphasise the importance of maintaining a jubilant and celebratory tone there is a tendency at British Caribbean funerals to see grieving and suffering as an inappropriate response to death. Grief is considered a type of suffering which is contrary to the Pentecostal doctrines of healing and prosperity. This suggests that the Pentecostals in this study have endorsed an over-realised eschatology. Drawing upon the work of Englebert,[1034] Pentecostals need to develop a theology of 'suffering' as an integral aspect of an

[1033] McKenzie, "Black British Theology in Gospel Music," pp.25-26.
[1034] Englebert, *Who is present in Absence,* p.13.

authentic spirituality that acknowledges the value of suffering and lament in the life of the believer.

For the rite of burial, many African traditional practises appear to be retained amongst British Caribbean Pentecostals and are in tension with Pentecostal normative theology. However, although certain grave tributes such as libations appear to have non-Christian origins this does not necessarily amount to a compromise of the normative Pentecostal doctrines. Participants in this study appeared to be expressing their identity through their ordinary theologies of death as they reconstruct their own rituals for honouring the dead. For most of the African and Caribbean participants, preference for burials rather than cremations is not necessarily motivated by theological convictions but appears to be motivated primarily by custom and tradition. Notwithstanding, Pentecostals also need to develop a theology of cremation as most Pentecostal clergy did not have any theological objections to cremations and many of them have carried out cremations themselves.

The importance of a continuing relationship with the deceased appears to be a retention of African and Caribbean traditional practices. Also, Aldred's 'theology of 'respect'[1035] helps to explain that how the dead are dressed, encased and transported to the next life is an expression of the dignity and respect that many British Caribbeans demand in their funerals. The burial rite also appears to resonate with the doctrine of the rapture held by Pentecostals and other Christian traditions which places emphasis on the preservation of the corpse for the resurrection of the dead.

[1035] Aldred, *Respect*, p.180.

In general, this study has shown that the normative theology of the church plays an important but limited role in the practice of rituals in the context of death. The church tradition certainly provides the structure, the language and the performance liturgy for the spiritual journey of the deceased for a Pentecostal funeral. In one sense, Pentecostals look to church authorities and clergy to lead the funeral service to ensure that their loved ones get a 'Christian' funeral. Outside the boundaries of church authority, people, particularly from the British Caribbean communities, appear to conduct themselves independently in personal expressions of ritualising their grief. This also reflects the experiential nature of Pentecostal spirituality whereby Pentecostals live out their theology practically. Whether or not such individual expression conforms with normative theologies of the church authorities is a secondary matter of interest to the bereaved. In doing so some of the bereaved appear to have retained some non-Christian practices from African and Caribbean traditional religions, which have been syncretized into many of their death rituals. These non-Christian practices such as 'community with the dead', death superstitions and grave tributes are shaped by their cultural and ethnic associations rather than their church or denominational affiliations. However, this does not mean that all of these rituals are in conflict with the normative theology of their churches. Participants have adapted these rituals for their own context and created new meanings to articulate ordinary theologies of death.

Therefore, ordinary theologies are the authoritative theological voices which underpin the traditions and practices of the bereaved. This demonstrates that it is the participation in rituals rather than the belief or understanding of rituals that forms the foundational moment for articulating ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death. These ordinary voices in relation to death constitute an authentic form of theology, even when not self-consciously understood by many of its participants as theology. If Pentecostals authorities identify and understand ordinary

voices as authentic theology the members may continue to value the church as an institution that facilitates their personal faith.

Applying the axiom, *lex orandi, lex credani,* this does not mean that normative theology has no role to play in this context. Pentecostals should acknowledge that practices and beliefs influence each other and they should take into account the interplay between worship and beliefs in their formulation of doctrinal theology. This may also result in confronting as well as accommodating certain ordinary ritual practices within the Pentecostal communities. This process also calls for Pentecostal denominations and churches to evaluate their own doctrine and beliefs in the light of new understandings emanating from ordinary theologies.

8.3 Recommendations for revised practice and for further research

Pentecostals should develop their practical theology in relation to death rituals and other rituals within the church community. By simply giving Pentecostals the opportunity to know the deep, hidden meanings of both Christian and non-Christian rituals and their cultural significance it may result in some people modifying their beliefs and practices. Further research may be needed to help clergy to find a balance between enabling the bereaved to exercise collective and personal rituals within sacred spaces whilst preserving a Christian framework. This should involve developing written liturgy for cremation services which is presently absent from Pentecostal ministers' manuals. It could also include developing alternative liturgy for burial rites which deal with the issue of the destiny of the soul of non-believers where the faith of the deceased is uncertain.

Further development of Yong's pneumatological approach to the interreligious encounter could provide the theological framework for folk religions that exist in the Pentecostal communities.

Therefore, it is recommended that Pentecostals develop a theology of religions that enables them to discern how the Spirit is universally present and active in these folk religions in relation to death rituals and other contexts.

Finally, Englebert argues for a more resilient comprehensive Pentecostal theology of suffering.[1036] Her thesis can be utilised to encourage Pentecostals to believe in the continuing work of the Spirit in the midst of grief, which is still part of God's ongoing process of restoration. Suffering is also seen by Eutsler as God's way of refining, transforming or correcting believers and may provide an opportunity to depend on God more in the midst of suffering.[1037] Pentecostal 'home-going' services have been regarded as being too triumphalistic, making insufficient room for grieve and lament. Therefore, the value of suffering can be redeemed as an integral aspect of an authentic spirituality contexts such as bereavement.

In terms of further research, I would recommend an investigation of ordinary Pentecostal theologies of death among Latin American and Asian diaspora churches in the UK, and the influence of indigenous cultural beliefs and practices. In addition, qualitative research is recommended on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on black Pentecostal funerals practices and theologies of death in the UK. This should include exploring how British Caribbeans rituals such as nine-nights and 'home-going' funerals have been impacted post-pandemic.

[1036] Englebert, *Who is present in Absence,* p.13.
[1037] Steve D. Eutsler, "Why Are Not All Christians Healed?" *Paraclete* Vol 27.2, pp.21-22.

APPENDIX I
SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

Dear #######

Invitation to take part in a Research

As you know I am a PHD student at the Theology & Religious Department of the University of Roehampton in London.

I am conducting research to obtain new insights into 'ordinary' Pentecostal theologies of death. Ordinary theology refers to the practices and beliefs towards death of Christians of by laity and clergy and I would like to extend an invitation to you and your church to participate in this research in three ways.

The first part of this research involves interviewing you on a one to one basis as part of this research. If you decide to participate, an interview would be arranged at a time and place at your convenience. The interview will last about 45 minutes. I will collect some personal data from you such as your age, race and theological educational background. The information will be kept private and confidential. This is a research purely for academic purposes and unless you agree otherwise, your real name will never be used in a publication or presentation.

During this interview I will ask you questions about the official doctrine of your church/denomination and practices relating to the death of a congregant, your experience of conducting funerals and how this may have changed over recent years. There are no right or wrong answers. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time or not answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

After the interview, I would like you to provide me with copies of any church publications relating to this subject which may include Statements of faith, teaching/preaching material or published books or journals. I may contact you at a later date to clarify certain points.

The second part of this research involves extending an invitation to your church congregants to participate in this research in the form of a focus group session. If you agree please find enclosed a "Sample Invitation Letter to Focus Group Participants" which contains more information for you to approve and the final version of which will need to be distributed to your congregants.

The third part of this research involves attending and observing the ritual events following the death of a congregant. This will include allowing me to observe and record rituals such as the liturgy, symbols and spoken words during funeral services, memorial services and wakes.

If you agree to this observation it will also be necessary for you to seek permission from the bereaved family on my behalf to find out whether they were interested participating in a research project as well. If the response is positive, I will need to be introduced to the family and be given the opportunity to explain the aims of the project and expectations of the family. A representative the family will also be asked to sign a Participant Consent Form. It would be explained to them that all the names of the participants will be anonymised. The Consent forms will also make it clear to the family what they are agreeing to, including how the data will be recorded. If you and the family are willing, I would also like ask permission to attend the meeting with you at which the content of the service was planned.

Families will be able to withdraw at any stage either before or after the funeral. If families withdrew after the funeral for any reason none of the data already collected from the observations will be used for the research and will be destroyed where possible.

Generally, the research will be conducted in accordance with the University of Roehampton Code of Good Research Practice a copy of which is enclosed. If you willing to participate in this research, I have also enclosed a Participant Consent Form for you to consider which of the three aspects of the research project you agree to and for you to sign and return the Consent form.

If you have any further questions about the research, please feel free to contact me via email or my mobile as detailed on the Consent From.

Please note that if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with me. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head or Department or Director of Studies using the contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Lloyd Richards
Researcher/Investigator at the University of Roehampton

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: Lloyd Richards

Department: MPhil Theology & Religious Studies

University Address: Erasmus House, Roehampton Lane, London

Postcode: SW15 5PU

Email: ##########[1038]

Telephone ##########

Director of Studies Contact Details:

Name: Dr Neil MacDonald

University Address: Erasmus House**,**

Roehampton Lane, London, SW15

5PJ

Email: ##########

Telephone: ##########

Head of Department Contact Details:

Name: Professor Mike Edwards

University Address: Erasmus House,

Roehampton Lane, London, SW15 5PJ

Email: ##########

Telephone: ##########

[1038] Some information has been redacted this way within the appendices to maintain confidentiality.

APPENDIX II

CLERGY CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: A study of theologies of death as it relates to funeral and death rituals within Pentecostal communities in Britain

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:

I am conducting research to obtain new insights into 'ordinary' Pentecostal theologies of death. Ordinary theology refers to the theology of Christians who have received little or no theological education of academic kind. However, this research is interested in the beliefs and practices relating to death of both Christian laity and clergy.

I am inviting senior ministers to take part in a personal interview on a one to one basis. The interview will be digitally recorded subject to specific permission being granted in the Consent Form. The interviews will last between 1 – 1½ hours and it will take place in a suitable room at the clergy's church or vestry. The number of interviews expected to be carried out by the end of this research is expected to be approximately 5 and the clergy.

The research will be conducted in accordance with the University of Roehampton Code of Good Research Practice, a copy of which is enclosed. If you have any further questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me via email or my mobile as detailed on the Consent From. If you decide to participate, I have also enclosed a Participant Consent Form for you to read, sign and return either directly to myself.

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: Lloyd Richards

Department: MPhil Theology & Religious Studies

University Address: Erasmus House, Roehampton Lane, London

Postcode: SW15 5PU

Email: ###############

Telephone: ###############

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research as outlined above and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

APPENDIX III

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Focus Groups

Title of Research Project: A study of theologies of death as it relates to funeral and death rituals within Pentecostal communities in Britain

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:

I am conducting research to obtain new insights into 'ordinary' Pentecostal theologies of death. Ordinary theology refers to the theology of Christians who have received little or no theological education of academic kind. However, this research is interested in the beliefs and practices relating to death of both Christian laity and clergy.

I would like to invite members of the church congregation to participate in this research in the form of a focus group session. The focus groups will be digitally recorded subject to specific permission being granted by all the participants in the Consent Form. The sessions will last approximately 45 minutes and it will take place in a suitable room at the participating church. The group sizes are expected to be between 10 and 15 all of the participants will be selected your church.

The research will be conducted in accordance with the University of Roehampton Code of Good Research Practice, a copy of which is enclosed. If you have any further questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me via email or my mobile as detailed on the Consent From below.

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: Lloyd Richards

Department: MPhil Theology & Religious Studies

University Address: Erasmus House, Roehampton Lane, London

Postcode: SW15 5PU

Email: ################

Telephone: ###############

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research as outlined above and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

APPENDIX IV

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CLERGY INTERVIEWS

1. What is your full name, the name of the church and your position in the church for the purposes of the recording?"
2. How often do you carry out funerals on average in one month?
3. What percentage (roughly) are cremations and burials?
4. If you have ever carried out cremation services, why not?
5. If you have carried out cremations, how does this correspond with your theology of death?
6. What did the families tend to do with the ashes after a cremation and why?
7. What do you believe happens to body and/or soul of the departed after death?
8. Why do you think that burial is still the most prominent amongst your congregants?
9. What is your understanding of the 'resurrection of the dead'?
10. Do you or your church believe that the *physical* body is resurrected into heaven after death?
11. Do you or your church believe that each deceased person goes *straight* to heaven after death?
12. If you do not believe that a person goes straight to heaven after dead when you believe this will happen?
13. Do you believe that any communication can be made with the deceased or by the deceased after death? If not, why not? OR If so, in what ways?
14. Describe some of the death or funeral rituals practiced following someone's death?
15. Where do think this ritual of [ ] originated came from? *Ask this question as many times necessary relating to each ritual mentioned.*
16. Are there any death rituals that have been carried out by bereaved family or friends that you have objected to or have been uncomfortable with? If Yes what are they and why?
17. How have death and funerals rituals changed in recent times? If so, how?
18. To what extent are Christian (or Pentecostal) funerals adapted or changed by other culturally established rituals.
19. Describe how are your funerals organised and who responsible for making the most input in the organisation of the funeral service.
20. How does the Holy Spirit help you throughout this period of your involvement of dealing with the death of a loved one?
21. Are there any other church doctrines and traditions in relation to death you would like to share?
22. Do you have any Funeral liturgy, teaching material, written sermons or any other publications you can produce to about your church or denominations doctrines and beliefs in relation to death?

APPENDIX V
SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

1. What are the church doctrines and traditions in relation to death as far as you are aware?
2. What do you believe happens to body and/or soul of the departed after death?
3. Are burials still the most prominent method of disposal of body's?
4. If yes, way do you think that burial is still the most prominent amongst your congregants?
5. Would anyone consider having their body cremated? Why or why not?
6. Has anyone here heard of bodies being encased in tombs rather than being buried and would you consider this for yourself?
7. What is your understanding of the 'resurrection of the dead'?
8. Do you believe that the *physical* body is resurrected into heaven after death?
9. Do you believe that that the soul goes *straight* to heaven after death?
10. Do you believe that any communication can be made with the deceased or by the deceased after death? If not, why not? OR If so, in what ways?
11. Describe some of the death or funeral rituals that are carried out following someone's death?
12. Who would they choose to carry out their funeral or the funeral of someone who is close to them and why?
13. How soon after the death of a loved one would a funeral take place?
14. Has anyone every given a tribute at a funeral and if so, can you remember what you said and why you said it?
15. Where do think this ritual of [originated came from? *Ask this question as many times necessary relating to each ritual mentioned.*
16. How have death and funerals rituals changed in recent times?
17. How many here have or would plan their funeral in advance?
18. Does anyone have a preference for using *black* funeral directors and if so why?
19. How does the Holy Spirit help you throughout this period of mourning?
20. Describe how are your funerals organised and who responsible for making the most input in organising the Service?

APPENDIX VI

SAMPLE OF A CLERGY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

LR – Could you give me your full name and the details of your church, your position at the church?

P – ##########################

LR – How long have you been a Pastor?

P – This will be my twentieth year.

LR – What tradition would you say that the Church of God of Prophecy is?

P – Pentecostal tradition

LR- As you know this study is about insight into Pentecostal theologies of death. Just to start off with – how many funerals on average would you say you conduct in one year?

P – On average probable in the region of about 20

LR – What ratio or percentage do you carry out burials in comparison to cremations?

P – We do very few cremations – probably 99 percent are burials

LR- But you have carried out cremations?

P- Yes

LR – Why do you think that there are very few cremations at your church?

P – I think that most of our congregation is from an African Caribbean background and in the Caribbean there is a tradition of mainly burials and very few cremations took place in Jamaica where I am from. Also, from a Christian perspective we do not see a biblical precedent for [cremations] in the New Testament, particular as Christ was actually buried. Not that I am against cremation, as for one it cost less, but even that does not influence most people [at our church] most people want to be buried because that is the tradition.

LR – Can you explain at bit more with how burials correspond with your biblical or doctrinal theology of the church?

P – There isn't anything which says that you can't do a cremation but I think it is generally viewed that because of Jesus' burial the bible tends to focus more on burials than cremation. There isn't a specific theology which says that it has to burial but given the New Testament precedent that we see I can't think of any example where someone was cremated. So, it's out of that biblical tradition that the churches then to follow and they are quite comfortable with that from a biblical perspective.

LR – In terms of the preservation of body in a burial as compared to a cremation, do you think that there is a difference in terms of understanding the material continuation of the body from this life to the next?

P – By that do you mean whether it is a cremation or burial?

LR - Yes

P – I think that most Pentecostal people are clear that it doesn't really matter whether you are cremated or buried, in one sense when it comes to the resurrection of the body, it really doesn't matter. People are clear that at the resurrection we will have a new body regardless of how our bodies are disposed of. There isn't any tension.

LR – Do you think that there is any material connection between the old body and the new body that will be given at the resurrection?

P - That is an interesting question. No I don't believe that there will as our general belief is that we will have a new body. Whilst our new body will be physical….it will be spiritual at the same time. For example, if you look at 1 Corinthians 15 when it talks about it sown in the natural body and raised as a spiritual body. In that sense we will dispose of the natural body and the body that we will have will be spiritual. In terms of connection I think we don't necessarily believe that we will have the same body as the body will be decayed and we will have a new body. Like when Jesus had a new body and he was able to do things appearing in a room without coming through the doors. There was something spiritual about his body and I think Paul implies that the natural body is raised as a spiritual body…

LR – You mentioned about the different things Jesus was able to do after the resurrection, do you think it was also significant that Jesus had to demonstrate the scares that he had from the crucifixion? Do you think he was trying to identify himself with that same person [before his crucifixion] with the new body that he had?

P – He was dealing with people that were somewhat doubtful and had to be persuaded with physical evidence [that he was Christ]. At the same time those people who he showed his scares to, saw him and walked with him for period of time and did not recognise him until he revealed himself. So whilst there is that tangible evidence from the scares that would suggest that it was the same body but scriptures also suggest that there was something so different about him that they did not recognise him for some time until he made himself known to them.

LR – From your recollection from the period that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples which was after his resurrection did Jesus remain with his disciples [until his ascension] or then he goes somewhere else and came back?

P – He appeared at different times to his disciples.

LR – I suppose what I am getting at is do you believe that there was a time of 'glorification' of Jesus' body after the resurrection?

P – I have heard something like that before. In particular where in the bible when Jesus appeared to them and Jesus said they should not touch him as he has not yet been ascended. In another occasion he allowed them to touch him and the implication is that in between those two events that he ascended and returned. That is something that is only implied from the biblical account. What is clear is that his ascension took place after that. One interpretation of when Jesus said, "do not touch' is "do not hold on to me" or "cling to me".

LR – What is your understanding of the 'resurrection of the dead' for the followers of Christ?

P – My understanding is that on the day of judgement the Christians will be resurrected. There will be two resurrections. The scriptures say that the trump of God will sound and the dead in Christ will rise first. In the sense that all those that are believers and trusted in Christ will rise first and then there will be a second resurrection afterwards where does that did not believe in him will be risen.

LR – What do you think happens to a Christian when he or she dies – immediately after their death?

P – Very interest question. It is interesting that when we go to funerals we say, generally speaking, that the departed at with God or in [heaven]. Yet when you speak to people close up it is said almost as a way of comforting people but biblical when you look at it closely it is clear that when people die or Christians they do not necessarily go straight to heaven, they rest and they are in period of sleep awaiting the resurrection. I think that whilst we say it when it comes to our biblical beliefs there is a period [after death] when people are resting. There is a sense in which the body dies and soul is resting. The question is where does that soul rest? The answer to that is not purgatory but there is a period in which they await the resurrection and the soul and body will be reunited.

LR – During this period of rest is the soul conscious? Can it be contacted?

P – Clearly Paul references this as a 'sleep'. I don't believe that it's conscious or contactable in that sense. We do not share the belief that souls can be contacted.

LR – So that is not something that is practiced or encouraged in your tradition?

P – No – it's every mush discouraged and is seen along the lines of the 'occult'.

LR – At the point of the end of the rest at the resurrection, how is the new body formed?

P – Going back to the part of the scripture which says that the 'dead in Christ will rise first'. This seems to imply that there is some sort of connection to the [original body]. Paul is clear in Corinthians that the seed which is sown is not that which will be because he says that if you sow a seed it will not geminate unless it dies. So there seems to something of a transformation which takes place and there is probably 'connection' but there is also a transformation that takes place, so the boy may not be the same but there is some sort of connection. Perhaps that is way Jesus was able to point to his scares but at the same time there is something clearly different when the transformation takes place. Whether people are recognisable, I am not quite sure, but a body that is both physical and spiritual - I know that the two does not normally go together, spirit and body, but that is what the New Testament seems to suggest – a spiritual body.

L- For the next part I am going to focus more on the practices and rituals in relation to death. What rituals do yourself or the bereaved families either immediately before or after someone dies?

P – When someone is at a point of death there is not a prescribed tradition. Basically, we would be with the family and the person and just try and comfort them, pray with them, just be there with and read some scriptures. There is from my own point of view an issue with that because of our believe inn divine healing sometimes that can become an issue with the families who what to believe that God will heal that person, whilst as a Pastor I want to minister to the person to help them to make that transition [to the next life] in way that brings comfort and without fear. It can become difficult for us as at the same time the family is [encouraging] praying for healing, often you want to prepare the person for death. There is that conflict and sometimes this may leave the Pastors looking that they have no faith. On the other hand, if you do not minister to the person, they could die very much alone and fearful because we are not accepting that they are dying. So there is that conflict there that we wrestle with sometimes.

Having done some volunteer chaplaincy work and seeing even the Catholics who have the 'Last rites' and the Anglicans who have the 'Service of Commendation' we do not have an equivalent to that [in my denomination] but I have tried to do is develop something that helps to bring some kind of formal process to a person who is dying so that we can bring comfort to the individual and to the family. This is by assuring them from the word of God that although they are dying there is a sense that they are involved, God is with them, and even though they are dying there is no need to worried or afraid but you can go to him with a sense of confidence. The scriptures are quite clear that if God has given us eternal life and life is in his Son Jesus Christ he who has the Son has life, therefore you will have life in death which does not interrupt and in that transition that takes place you are safe. These scriptures or comforting words is what we can offer to the [potentially] bereaved and the person who is dying who is also grieving the potential loss of their family.

LR- Once the person has died is there any rituals that you immediately carry out for the departed or the family

P- Along similar lines we do not have a specific formal ritual, we administer prayers and words of comfort with the family, giving them assurance that the person is in the arms of God if they believe in God. One of the things I found that seeing [other last rite traditions] there is a sense that you are letting someone go and given them permission rather than the person being wrenched away from them. There is a sense that you can help families to realise that it is okay to let them go. Basically, when people die them are very emotionally as you would expect, and sometimes you will need to try and calm them, but sometimes what we find that the minister is the calming presence in the family. After the initial emotionally outburst there is a silence and that is okay, we do not often need to interrupt that silence but I think after a while if you are there as a minister you are expect to do something or say something. Often times we need to offer those words of comfort from the scriptures and prayers for the family and in our [Pentecostal] tradition we don't pray for the dead but we do pray for the families.

LR – You mentioned that because they [the departed] believed in God, at that particular stage of their death, how is your approach different if you are not certain of their Christian faith.

P – I am quite clear, because the scriptures are quite clear, he would have the Son has life, he who does not have the son does not have life. I make no pretence when I have doing a funeral. If a person is not a Christian, I am not going to make a Christian out of them but I am not going to condemn them either. So we will give similar comfort to the family and pray for them and support them but we cannot give the same consolation as someone who had faith and trusted in Christ. That is missing and I will not pretend and make things up – whether at the death of the person or the funeral or burial.

LR – What sort of rituals or traditions are you or the bereaved family involved in after the death but before the funeral – in that intervening period?

P – Once people have heard the news people what to come [to the family home] to pay their respect. Going back to the Caribbean peoples used to do what is called a 'nine nights', where people come together night after night. Back in the Caribbean and in the early days here [in England] there used to be a lot of singing and now that is kind of dying out to a great extent.

LR – Why was it called '*Nine* nights?'

P – I'm not sure. There are certain traditions about the person's spirit but I can't remember the details.

APPENDIX VII

SAMPLE OF A FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT

LR – How many funerals do you go to during the course of a year on average?

Various responses: 20, 1 or 2, 1 a week

LR – Out of those funerals that you have been to, how many of those have been burials and many of those have been cremations in proportion?

V1 – 95% burials

Virtually everyone agreed

LR – So you all have been to cremations at some point?

Virtually everyone agreed

LR – Those cremations that you have been to have they been at this church or another church?

V2 – Within this this body (COGOP)

V3 I have been to a Pentecostal church cremation. I think I've been to quite a few actually.

LR – As anyone in your close family been cremated?

V4 – I had an uncle who was cremated this year.

LR – What was the service like?

V4 – The service was at the crematorium and it wasn't like how we would have service, it was shorter – about 45 minutes.

LR – Who her would contemplate being cremated themselves?

None answered

LR – Why would you never consider cremations or why would you only consider to be buried?

V5 – I would prefer to be buried but the way things are going with lack of space I think we may have to start considering cremations. But I am a traditional person.

LR – Does everyone else of a similar (or different view)?

V6 – I think mine is based on the premise of the bible. "Dust we came and dust we shall return". So, I would always struggle with the concept of being burnt. I know that we are going to go back to ashes anyway [being buried], but the experience I have had going to other people's cremation I would not to put my family under that pressure to cremate me….I just believe that somehow it goes against the principles I believe in and what the church and the bible says.

LR – Is it the case the funeral services that you all attend in this church are always burials?

Everyone agreed

V6 - I have been to a cementation service once for my sister in law but I myself would not like to be cremated.

LR – Why not

V6 – I just do not like it and I would rather be put in the ground

V5 - You asked the question as to whether burials were the norm within our church but I don't know whether it is done out of chose or whether it is the norm and sometimes we do need a discussion about how people feel [about how these wish to be disposed of].

V7 – Personally I would not have a problem of being cremated because firstly I would not know. However, it would depend and how your family leave behind feels about it because it is so traditional to be actually buried it might go against the grain with those who are left behind. I also believe that cremation is cheaper.

V8- I personally think it is a traditional thing as within history most people were actually burnt rather than buried

LR – What do you think happens to the spirit or the soul after death?

V9 – I believe that the spirit leaves the body and it doesn't go down in the earth

LR – Leaves the body and goes where?

V9 – I think that the Lord has prepared a place for the spirit to go in reserve until he is ready.

LR – You means you don't think that the spirit goes straight to heaven?

V9 – I don't think so

A few other people agree

LR – Does anyone else have any idea where or how the spirit is reserved?

V10 – I'm not 100% sure but it would seem that it would not go straight to heaven because the judgement would have to take place first. It seems like it like somewhere in a resting place until the judgement

V11 – The bible speaks that the dead in Christ shall rise. There is a whole new place somewhere as when he comes back we will rise

V12 – But is not just those who die in Christ. It's everyone that's died. So we all are going have a place where we are waiting for the judgment.

LR – While you are in this resting place are you going to be conscious or unconscious?

V13 – I think we will be sleeping until the Day of Judgment and then we will be awake. But it will not be the sleep as we know sleep to be.

V14 – There is a comparison we can make in our own lives as when we sleep at night time passes fast. So for those that sleep in Christ time passes so fast they are not aware of time as we are aware of time.

V15 – Everyone know that my husband passed away. Even Wednesday I go up to the cemetery and I talk to him. I know he is not hearing what I am saying but I am still talking.

LR – Does that help you?

V15 Oh yes.

LR- As anyone else had similar experiences?

V16 – I communicate and talk to my grand-parents and reminisce, no expecting them to talk back. We all kind of go through that process where we reminisce and talk to them. We may even be in their room or their graveside.

LR – Does anyone think that they are listening at all?

V17 – I remember losing my Aunt some years back now – about 15 -20 years and I still communicate with her like a still communicate with her verbally – but don't think she can hear me because she is rested – sleeping.

V18 – I am a Caribbean and I have experienced something once after my father's death. My mother would often say that I dreamt him and that he would appear to her in a dream. The chances are that whatever they come to say may have some relevance even as Christians.

LR- Can anyone explain what is going on.

V19 – My mum has passed away about 6 years now and I have 1 child – a son. I remember clearly he was courting this young lady. I went to bed and in the middle of night I just felt like a presence in the room and I heard my mother's voice calling out his name which caused me to rise out of the bed quickly.

V20 – I know that we are taking about communicating with the dead but when we look into the bible it says that of the dead their thoughts and emotions are no more you are dead. So how then we can say that someone appears to us in a dream? It may possible be because that we have this people on our minds, but I think it is contrary to what the bible says.

Concluded at 8.53pm, 49 mins

APPENDIX VIII

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

This research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference HUM 16/014 in the Department of Humanities and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 20 April 2016

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